

Palliative Care

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illness. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses and other specialists who work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

Palliative care providers

Palliative care is an interdisciplinary medical specialty. That means that members of a palliative care team can include providers like physicians, nurses, social workers, spiritual counselors, dietitians, therapists and pharmacists, as well as family members and caregivers.

The importance of palliative care

Palliative care can provide patients relief from symptoms like pain, anxiety, shortness of breath, fatigue and other challenges that are the result of a chronic or serious condition, and the treatments for that condition. The Institute of Medicine recommends that all Americans with advanced illnesses have access to palliative care services provided by well-trained professional teams.¹

The benefits of palliative care not only help the patient, but also their families and the medical system. "Hospital palliative care programs have been shown to improve physical and psychological symptom management, caregiver well-being, and family satisfaction and small, single-site studies suggest that palliative care programs may reduce hospital and intensive care unit (ICU) expenditure."²

Advance care planning

Advanced Care planning supports individuals in making plans and written instructions about their future health care, and deciding what matters most for upcoming and end of life care.

Minnesota initiatives

Minnesota has a long history of supporting palliative care. In 2017, the Minnesota Legislature passed HF 345 and SF 112 to create the Palliative Care Advisory Council under Minnesota Statutes, section 144.059 under jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Health.