

Palliative Care

Life-enhancing, Comprehensive Care



What is palliative (PAL-ee-yuh-tiv) care?

When we are confronted with a serious diagnosis or worsening of a chronic condition, we seek to live as well as possible while pursuing treatments and therapies that will help us fight the disease. Medical care has become increasingly adept at treating diseases, but despite effective treatments, our fight with an illness may be overwhelming. We may experience symptoms caused by our illness and its treatments and struggle with the practical issues of living. At the same time, we try to attend to our medical care and worry as to the meaning of our illness and its impact on our life. Medical care treats the illness, but sometimes our care may feel fragmented amidst the directions of multiple specialists. Consequently, we may literally feel lost in the struggle.

Palliative care is medical care by an interdisciplinary team that promotes quality of life and relieves suffering. The goal is to identify the physical, psychological, spiritual and practical burdens of illness and promote the best possible quality of life for patients and families facing serious, life-threatening illness. **Palliative care occurs simultaneously with treatments that have cure and recovery as their goal.** Supporting the whole person and family in the midst of the struggle can more effectively allow a person to live well, whether the goal is cure or care.

Palliative care consultation

A palliative care consultation is the way most patients and families access palliative care support. A consultation helps to clarify the goals of care, the practical needs of patients and families and the overall impact of illness.



The patient and family thus can achieve a better sense of control and direction around their treatments and the illness itself.



Maureen's* story is an example of the integrative approach and the benefits of palliative care. Maureen's husband Joe first contacted CareCenter for help when Maureen once again was diagnosed with pneumonia. This was the second time within six months and likely because of her ongoing fight against Parkinson's disease. Maureen was not doing well. She was seeing many specialists—neurology, infectious disease and rehabilitation—as well as her cardiologist and pulmonary doctor. The couple did not know how to make sense of the medical advice and treatment recommendations. Their anxiety over the complexities of Maureen's medical situation seemed to intensify her complaints of feeling weak and ill.

They had heard about the CareCenter Palliative Care Consultation program through their primary care physician, who was very concerned about Maureen's overall well-being. Initially they had been reluctant to call, as they thought palliative care and hospice were the same

*To protect patient privacy and confidentiality, we have changed the names and altered details of this story.

thing. However, Joe did call CareCenter, and the couple visited with a palliative care physician the next day. The consultation was particularly helpful because it gave Maureen and Joe an opportunity to sort through what they understood about her illness and the practical needs for assistance that might make both their lives easier. They realized that they needed to plan for the “what ifs” and “what happens next” aspects of life, as well as their immediate care needs. Clearly more help was needed in the home, as Maureen’s sleepless nights were taking their toll on Joe. Likewise, Maureen’s painful arthritis and the muscle stiffness of her Parkinson’s were limiting her ability to participate in any rehabilitation. They had been moving from one healthcare crisis to another and had never really talked about quality of life or the possibility of not getting better. To Maureen and Joe, talking about and planning for what could happen seemed to be a relief of their silent worries.

The physician evaluated Maureen’s discomfort and other symptoms and set up an initial plan of treatment, which was discussed with Maureen’s primary care physician. Medications were adjusted, and breathing exercises were recommended as well as home-based physical therapy until Maureen’s strength improved. The palliative care social worker helped Maureen and Joe figure out some ways for Joe to have help in his caregiving role. A nurse practitioner was scheduled to provide follow-up home visits to ensure that Maureen’s overall health improved and that her symptoms of pain were relieved.

Maureen’s personal goal had been to be well enough to attend her grandson’s high school graduation the next month. She in fact was able to thoroughly enjoy this festive occasion from her front-row seat!

Integrated yet specialized

Palliative care is a general approach that ideally should be integrated into the treatment plan for any person facing a serious or life-threatening illness. It also is a specialized form of care delivered by a trained interdisciplinary team. **Midwest Palliative & Hospice CareCenter** is a nationally recognized comprehensive palliative care program that is life-affirming and offers support from the time of diagnosis of a serious illness or injury, through and after treatment.

Our role at CareCenter is to position ourselves alongside patients and families to provide support. . . to learn and understand what their goals are in terms of treating and living well with an illness. Then we coordinate and deliver appropriate services that can alleviate physical and emotional pain and symptoms, provide spiritual support and enhance quality of life. **No matter the diagnosis, prognosis or treatment.**



Midwest PALLIATIVE & HOSPICE CareCenter™

2050 Claire Court
Glenview, IL 60025

24-hour phone

(847) 467-7423
(800) 331-5484

TTY

(800) 526-0857

Website

www.carecenter.org

Service Area

North/Northwest Chicago
North Suburbs
Lake County

Inpatient Hospice Unit

Skokie