

Palliative Care - What is it all about?



Definitions

- **Palliative care** is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual (WHO).
- **Palliative care** is the active holistic care of individuals across all ages with serious health-related suffering due to severe illness, and especially of those near the end of life. It aims to improve the quality of life of patients, their families and their caregivers (IAHPC).
- **Hospice care** is reserved for terminally ill patients when treatment is no longer curative, during the last 6 months of life, assuming the disease takes its normal course. *Palliative care and hospice are therefore not synonymous.*

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), palliative care is a human right!

Myths vs. Facts:

- **Myth:** Palliative Care refers only to pain relief and only in cases of cancer patients who are about to die. **Fact:** Palliative Care is useful in any life limiting illness and includes prevention, early identification, comprehensive assessment and management of physical issues, including pain and other distressing symptoms, psychological distress, spiritual distress and social needs.
- **Myth:** Palliative Care means that I am about to die very soon. **Fact:** Palliative Care is applicable throughout the course of an illness, from the point of diagnosis of any life-limiting illness, and is tailored according to the patient's needs.
- **Myth:** Palliative Care means that my doctor has given up on me. **Fact:** Palliative Care is provided in conjunction with disease modifying therapies whenever needed (e.g. treating a pneumonia in a patient with end stage kidney disease) and provides support to help patients **live as fully as possible** until death by facilitating effective communication, helping them and their families determine goals of care.
- **Myth:** Palliative Care hastens death. **Fact:** Palliative Care intends neither to hasten nor postpone death; it affirms life, and recognizes dying as a natural process. Quality Palliative Care has in many cases been shown to positively influence the course of illness.

Also...

- Palliative Care is applicable throughout all health care settings (place of residence and institutions) and in all levels (primary to tertiary).
- Palliative Care is delivered whilst recognizing and respecting the cultural values and beliefs of the patient and the family.
- Palliative Care provides support to the family and the caregivers during the patient's illness, and in their own bereavement.
- Physicians should counsel patients about palliative care at the time of confirmed diagnosis, thereby encouraging the initiation of early palliative care, which has been shown to improve patient outcomes.

For more information about Palliative Care and work of the BAPC, give us a call at (246)234-9196 or email us at info@barbadospalliative.org.