upon them. Many find it difficult to care for a relative who is ill while trying to handle other obligations, such as work and caring for other family members.

Additional issues can add to the stress, including uncertainty about how to help their loved one with medical situations, inadequate social support, and emotions such as worry and fear. These challenges can compromise their own health. The palliative care team can help families and friends cope with these issues and give them the support they need.

For more information on caring for the family needs refer to our booklet on “Caring for the Caregivers”.

Q: 6. How is palliative care given at the advanced stages of cancer?

A: The palliative care team can help patients and their loved ones prepare for physical changes that may occur at the advanced stages of cancer and address appropriate symptom management for this stage of care. The team can also help patients cope with the different thoughts and emotional issues that arise. Additionally, the palliative care team can support family members and loved ones emotionally and with issues that arise with the progression of the disease.

Q: 7. Is there any research that shows the benefits of palliative care?

A: Yes, research shows that palliative care and its many components are beneficial to patients’ and family health and well-being. A number of studies in recent years have shown that patients who have their symptoms controlled and are able to communicate their emotional needs have a better experience with their medical care and that their quality of life and physical symptoms improve.

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What is Palliative Care



المركز الوطني لعلاج وأبحاث السرطان
National Center for Cancer Care & Research

عضو في مؤسسة حمد الطبية
A Member of Hamad Medical Corporation

Q: 1. What is palliative care?

A: Palliative care is care given to improve the quality of life of patients who have a serious or life-threatening disease, such as cancer.
The goal of palliative care is to prevent or treat, as early as possible, the symptoms and side-effects of the disease and its treatment, in addition to the related psychological, social, and spiritual problems. Palliative care is also called Supportive Care.
Understanding what palliative care is and how you can get this type of care can help you improve your quality of life at any stage of illness.

Q: 2. When is palliative care used in cancer care?

A: Palliative care is given throughout a patient's experience with cancer. It should begin at diagnosis and continue throughout treatment as it focuses on preventing, treating, reducing or removing discomfort whenever or however it appears.

Q: 3. Who provides palliative care?

A: A palliative care specialist is a health professional who specializes in treating the symptoms, side effects, and emotional problems experienced by patients. The goal is to maintain the best possible quality of life.

Frequently, palliative care specialists work as part of multidisciplinary team to coordinate care. This palliative care team consists of doctors, nurses, nursing case managers, nurse and patient educators, dieticians, pharmacists, social workers, psychologists and/or a hospital spiritual advisor.

Q: 4. Which issues are addressed in palliative care?

A: Palliative care can address a broad range of issues, integrating an individual's pace into care. The physical and emotional effects of cancer and its treatment may be very different from person to person. For example, variations in age, cultural background, or support systems may result in very different palliative care needs.

Comprehensive palliative care will take the following issues into account for each patient:

- **Physical:** Common physical symptoms include pain, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath and insomnia. Many of these can be relieved with medicines or by using other methods, such as nutrition therapy, or deep breathing techniques. Also, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or surgery may be used to shrink tumors that are causing pain and other problems.
- **Emotional and coping:** Palliative care specialists can provide resources to help patients and families deal with the emotions that come with cancer diagnosis and cancer treatment. Depression, anxiety, and fear are only a few concerns that can be addressed through Palliative Care. Experts may provide counseling, recommend support groups, hold family meetings, or make referrals to mental health professionals.
- **Practical:** Cancer patients may have financial and legal worries, insurance questions, and employment concerns. For many patients and families, the technical language and specific details of laws and forms are hard to understand. To ease the burden, the palliative care team may assist in coordinating the appropriate services. For example, the team may direct patients and families to resources that can help with financial counseling, understanding medical forms or legal advice, or identifying local and national resources.
- **Spiritual:** With a cancer diagnosis, patients and families often look more deeply for meaning in their lives. Some find the disease brings them more faith, whereas others question their faith as they struggle to understand why cancer happened to them. An expert in Palliative Care can help people explore their beliefs and values so that they can find a sense of peace or reach a point of acceptance that is appropriate for their situation.

Q: 5. Can a family member receive support from a palliative care team?

A: Yes, family members are an important part of cancer care, and, like the patient, they have a number of changing needs. It's common for family members to become overwhelmed by the extra responsibilities placed