

# A Focus on Palliative Care

Palliative Care is an interdisciplinary approach to maximizing quality of life and reducing suffering among individuals with chronic, complicated disease. The focus of this care approach is the improvement of quality of life, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the quality and reducing the severity of suffering. In the medical literature, several different definitions of palliative care have been used. In general, it is meant to replace curative methods in patients who are suffering from life-threatening diseases and disorders such as cancer, infectious diseases, neurological disorders, and end-stage renal diseases.

caring for someone dying

It is recognized that many deaths every year are caused by preventable and treatable causes. However, if treatment is discontinued early, many of these deaths could still be prevented. For example, in the case of cancer, the very early treatments for such diseases may slow the development of cancer, but in the absence of timely treatment, the development of cancer has progressed to the extent that the patient may suffer from side effects at an advanced age. Likewise, if palliative care was provided when the patient was diagnosed with HIV, the infection may still have been contained and prevented, thereby allowing for the prolonging of the life expectancy of the HIV infected individual.

Another important aspect of palliative care focuses on the families of patients who are suffering from serious illnesses. The support and encouragement of close family members, as well as the provision of information, can help to improve the overall mental and physical health of patients who are receiving hospice care. The focus on encouraging family members and taking care of the patients at home makes it possible to provide emotional support to the individuals who are receiving hospice care. In some cases, a focus on relieving symptoms in the early stages of the illness helps to minimize the side effects of chemotherapy or radiation therapy, improving the quality of life for the person receiving such treatment.