



Hendricks Community Hospital strives to serve Hendricks and our surrounding communities. To inform our area patrons, we will be publishing topics in our area newspapers about the services and specialties we offer at our local level. Various topics will be covered throughout the next several months to ensure our community is provided with the best knowledge in making their healthcare choices. Our goal is that you enjoy reading more about the services we provide and feel more confident in your decision-making.

Preparing for End of Life with Hospice Care **By Kennedy Tesch**

Many times, a patient and their families come to a decision where they choose not to seek aggressive therapy or treatment for a debilitating disease or illness. These situations can range for illnesses such as, but not limited to, cancer or end stage diseases. In some cases, this can also be a choice for patients and families dealing with the effects of Alzheimer's or advanced age.

After the well thought out decision to not seek treatment, the patient may then consult their physician who then assists them with speaking with a representative from a hospice program. Hospice is a type of health care that focuses on the palliation of a terminally ill patient's pain and symptoms while attending to their emotional and spiritual needs at the end of life. Hospice care prioritizes comfort and quality of life by reducing pain and suffering. Often there is a perception that hospice care means the end, however, it is important to understand that hospice care is there to help guide the patient and family through the death process and add quality and peace to the time the individual has left.

Hospice focuses on caring for the patient, not curing the patient. Hospice care provides medical services, emotional support, and spiritual resources for those in the end stage of life. Hospice also helps a family manage the practical details and emotional challenges of caring for their loved one at the end stage of life. Hospice is specialized care that focuses on enhancing the quality of the days the patient has left instead of continuing with treatment to prolong life, striving to give the patient control and dignity in the time they have left.

There are different levels of hospice depending on the needs of the patient. They may choose to be in the comfort of their home, the nursing home or assisted living. Hospice includes routine visits from several disciplines of the hospice team to ensure comfort and make sure basic care is met. These team members work with the staff or family closely and assist them to give quality care.

When managing specific symptoms, sometimes a patient requires inpatient care. This means the patient will need to utilize hospice care in a facility, with home like amenities where families can give input and be included in the caregiving, but the patient may need the support of 24 hour care to control symptoms.

Respite care is another form of hospice care. A patient spends a short time in a facility setting so their primary caregivers can take a break and avoid burnout.

A hospice team can include doctors, nurses, social workers, clergy members and family. Members on the team work together to assess each patient's needs and provide support and resources for an individualized care plan.

"Our job as end-of-life workers is to get beyond the misinformation, the fear and assist patients and families to work through the death process itself while supporting them with comfort and peace for everyone to be achieved," said Alicia Tykwinski, R.N. and Hendricks Community Hospital Association hospice coordinator.

We hope by introducing this information on hospice care, our community has better awareness and more comfort in making choice at the end of life. We also hope it helps reduce the misperceptions that can often be associated with hospice care.