



Palliative Care: Improving the Quality of Life for Caregivers and Veterans with Chronic Illness

Our Veteran's caregivers are privy to the hard realities of witnessing chronic illness. You know too well the worried, sleepless nights of caregiving. You have been there as a source of comfort when they were fearful, angry, hopeless, or helpless. You know how illness may have contributed to you both feeling isolated, alone, or misunderstood. You have witnessed the toll that illness has taken on one's time, energy, strength, social life, interests, and abilities. However, facing these changes together with support, there is also hope. That hope can come through from the resource of VA Palliative Care, a team approach to care for everyone involved.

What is Palliative Care?

- Palliative care is specialized medical care for those with chronic, serious, or life limiting illness, at any age, or stage of illness.
- Palliative care may be considered when you have been diagnosed with a serious or chronic illness for example cancer, heart and lung disease, dementia, or kidney failure, and is best started early to enhance quality of life throughout the illness.
- Palliative care has a unique focus on not only the Veteran patient, but also the Caregiver & other involved family members.

How Can Palliative Care help:

- Palliative care helps patients find relief; from pain, debilitating symptoms, and the emotional distress caused by serious illness and its treatment.
- The Palliative Care Team is focused on improving the quality of life for the patient while also recognizing the significant role of the patient's family and caregivers.
- Palliative Care Teams facilitate important conversations relating to appointing a health care agent, life sustaining treatment preferences and completion of appropriate Advance Directive forms.

Important to note: Palliative care is an extra layer of support to help you and your loved one.

What are Advance Directives:



- The Advance Directive defines the life sustaining treatments wanted by the Patient, and the Health Care Proxy identifies the trusted individual to make decisions for the Patient when they are not able.
- The VA utilizes specific Advance Directive forms (VA form 10-0137) which help to identify which questions to ask and where to document the answers.
- Advance directives are state specific, and most forms will not be honored in a different state. You can find your specific states forms at the web site: at www.caringinfo.org.
- Some of the information discussed may include appointing a health care agent, discussing the use of particular lifesaving treatments and how strictly the Patient wants the form to be followed.
 - Discussion points may include:
 - Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation vs. Allowing Natural Death
 - Intubation
 - Feeding Tube
 - Dialysis

How can I access VA Palliative Care services?

- The Veteran's PACT can place a referral for Palliative Care consultation.