

# Defining Palliative Care

- **Definition:**

- Palliative care is a **philosophy of care** and type of **specialized health care** for **people living with a serious illness**.
- This type of care is focused on **providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness**.
- The goal is to **improve quality of life** for both the **patient and the family**.

# Defining Palliative Care

- Provided by a specially-trained **team**, palliative care specialists work together with a patient's other doctors to **provide an essential layer of support.**
- Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the prognosis. It is appropriate **at any age and at any point in a serious illness** and **can be delivered with curative treatment.**

## Relief From Symptoms and Stress



- Pain
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Coping/Stress
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite/Weight Loss
- Neuropathy
- Caregiving

# Team-Based Approach



## Doctor & Nurse

- Prescribes medication
- Helps with medical decisions
- Coordinates with other doctors



## Social Worker

- Emotional Support
- Caregiver support
- Medical equipment
- Financial concerns



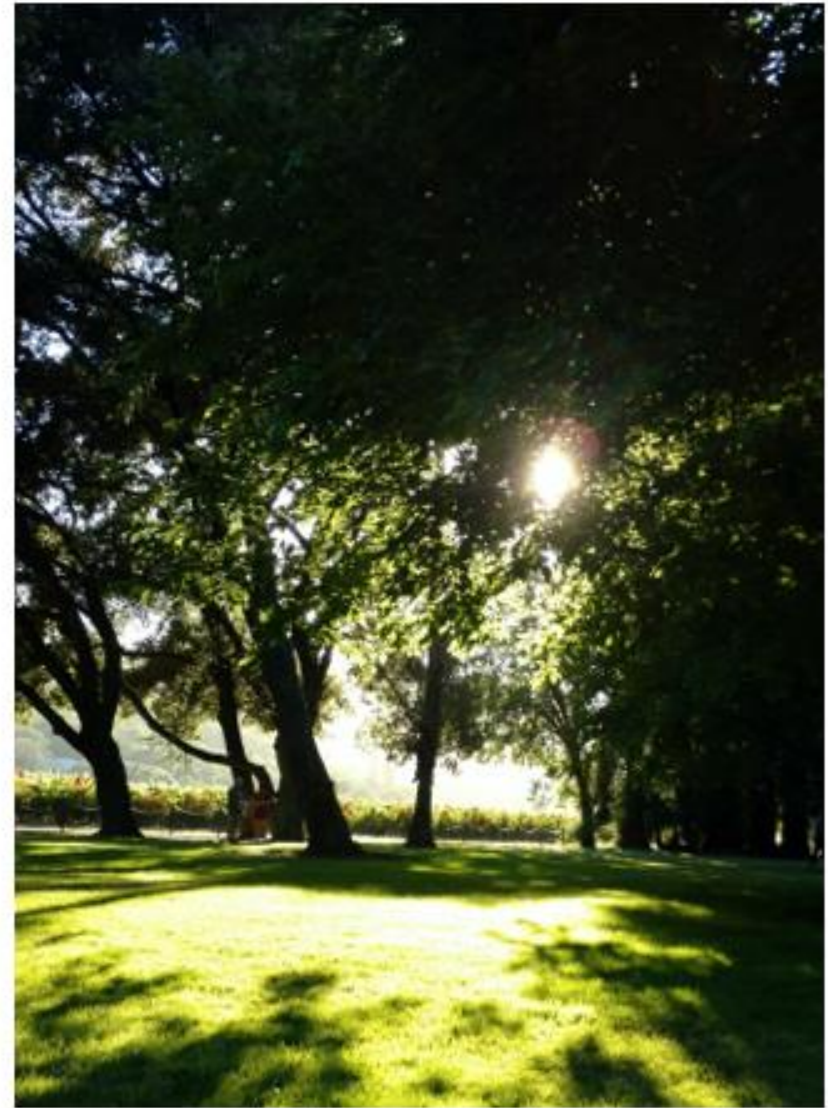
## Chaplain

- Spiritual support
- Existential distress
- Prayers and blessings



# What is hospice?

1. A philosophy of care
2. An insurance benefit
3. A set of services



# A philosophy of care



- Comfort-focused care
- Delivered where patients want to be

# An insurance benefit

- Covered by all insurance plans (including Medicare and Medicaid)
- Insurance guidelines mandate that patients have a 6 month or less estimated prognosis
  - Typically does not cover cancer-directed therapy (such as chemotherapy or immunotherapy)
- Discussion about specific treatments is possible



# A set of services

- Interdisciplinary Team
  - Doctor
  - Nurse-Case Manager
  - Social Worker
  - Chaplain
  - Volunteer
  - Home health aide
- Home-Based Care (if desired)
- 24hr Nurse Call Line
- Ability to send “on demand” nurse to home
- Ability to transfer to nursing home if desired
- Prescribe and provide all medications
- Prescribe and provide all medical equipment
  - Hospital bed
  - Bedside commode
  - Wheelchair
- Does not provide 24hr care





# What is Advance Care Planning?



- Advance care planning is **making decisions** about the health care you would want to receive **if you become unable to speak for yourself**.
- These are **your decisions to make**, regardless of what you choose for your care.
- The decisions are **based on your personal values**, preferences, and discussions with your loved ones.

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**Stanford**  
MEDICINE

Palliative Care  
Department of Medicine

# What Type of Decisions Should We Think About?

- Who would you want to make decisions for you if you were unable to communicate?
- What makes life worth living given your current health status?
- What would be important to you if you were seriously ill or even at the end of your life?



# What Type of Decisions Should We Think About?



- Are there limitations you would put on life-prolonging treatment?
- Would you want to receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation or be placed on a breathing machine?

Its always too early, until its  
too late”

-The Conversation Project, 2013