

# **Palliative Care**

## **Nursing Care: Palliative Care**

### **Introduction to Nursing and Palliative Care**

Palliative and end of life (EOL) care are major components of any nursing role. Palliative care is any care provided to a client to decrease the symptoms caused by a life-limiting disease. Hospice, or care of a client at the end of life, is a form of palliative care.

Our goals as healthcare providers are:

- Improve the client's quality of life.
- Preserve dignity.
- Demonstrate compassion, respect, and empathy.

Getting there, however, can be both a physically and emotionally draining journey for the client, family, and healthcare provider.

This learning activity focuses on the concept of nursing palliative care of clients. By completing this learning activity, you will gain the knowledge and skills needed for palliative care nursing.

### **Palliative Care**

Palliative care is an umbrella term for any care or treatment that focuses on reducing symptoms of a disease process. Most people incorrectly interchange the concept of palliative care and hospice, but hospice is a form of palliative assistance.

Clients who may receive palliative care are:

- a client undergoing a mastectomy for breast cancer
- a client with end stage renal disease undergoing dialysis
- a client who has terminal lung cancer and is utilizing hospice care

<b>Goals of Palliative Care</b>
• Regard dying as a normal process.
• Provide relief from symptoms, including pain.
• Affirm life and neither hasten nor postpone death.
• Support holistic client care and enhance quality of life.
• Offer support to clients to live as actively as possible until death.
• Offer support to the family during the client's illness and in their own bereavement.

Palliative care is a multidisciplinary team effort, including physicians, nurses, dietitians, therapy support, chaplains, social workers, and other healthcare professionals. The client's family and caretakers are also included in this process, which is beneficial for both parties.

## **Hospice Care**

Hospice care provides compassion, concern, and support for clients in the last phases of a terminal disease. The main goals of hospice are to assist the client to live fully as comfortably as possible and to die pain-free and with dignity.

Hospice care can be provided in a variety of settings, including the client's home, in-patient acute care settings, or long-term care facilities. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide help and care for both the client and their families during this time. Hospice services are covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and many private insurance agencies. There are two criteria for a client to be admitted to hospice services:

### *Criteria 1*

The client must desire these services and understand that this care is not to provide any sort of "cure" to their disease process.

### *Criteria 2*

Two physicians need to certify that the client has a terminal illness with less than 6 months to live. It's important to note here that this is not a "guarantee" of life expectancy; it is an estimate. If the client survives beyond 6 months and still meets hospice eligibility criteria, their insurance organizations will continue to reimburse for the services.

Sometimes, a client stabilizes and no longer requires hospice care. They are then discharged from the service but can reenter at any time if necessary.

As with all palliative care services, hospice is an interdisciplinary team including volunteers to provide holistic care and support. The hospice nurse plays a pivotal role in coordinating the hospice team. They provide compassionate, diligent care and need excellent teaching skills, flexibility, cultural competence, and adaptability.

## **End of Life Care**

*End of life* (EOL) generally refers to the final phase of a client's illness when death is imminent. Care administered at the end of life focuses on physical and psychosocial needs for both the client and their family.