



Hospice of the Twin Cities

Hospice Insights

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“If there is hope in the future, there is power in the present.”
- John Maxwell

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

With the Holidays upon us it is time for gifts; hope; good cheer; families sharing special moments; memories of past holidays; celebrations; reflection; generosity; good will; well wishes for happiness, love, and peace; remembering loved ones and relationships we have lost; and for many, resolutions. It is perhaps the most difficult time of the year to bring up the subject of hospice. No one wants to think their loved one is nearing the end of their life, especially this time of the year! But let us think about what hospice brings.

Hospice brings hope, comfort, peace and the presence of those who care, with the acknowledgment that each

and every one of us has made valuable contributions in our lives, and that our lives have meaning from the moment we take our first breath until we take our last breath.

It seems appropriate then that we, as caregivers, continue assessing our residents/patients for hospice appropriateness throughout the holiday season. It could be the greatest gift we give to those we love and care about. As Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the first hospice, said, *“You matter to the last moment of your life and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but to live until you die.”*

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CARING FOR YOURSELF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

As caregivers, it is important for all of us to “take care of ourselves”. It is evident our intentions are good, but it is difficult for us to do on a consistent basis. Another fact is “if we do not take care of ourselves, we will be unable to care for others.” When we reach this point we are experiencing “*compassion fatigue*”.

Here are some ways to help care for yourself:

- Allow time for yourself. This is especially significant if you are caring for others on a daily basis and even more important if you are also dealing with a loss of your own.
- Be aware, as caregivers, that you are at “high risk for burnout”. This is very important and is often overlooked.

Basic End-Stage Indicators:

- ◆ Overall physical decline
- ◆ Life limiting condition
- ◆ Clinical progression of the disease as evidenced by
 - Multiple ER visits
 - Inpatient hospitalizations
 - Serial physician assessment
 - Laboratory studies
 - Radiologic or other studies
- ◆ Impaired nutritional status
 - Decrease in appetite; increase in wt loss
 - Serum albumin <2.5mg/dl (not to be used in isolation)
- ◆ Multiple co-morbidities
- ◆ Decline in functional status (ADLs)

Specific Guidelines for determining Prognosis

Debility Unspecified

- Progression of disease as documented by symptoms, signs, and test results.
- Decline in Karnofsky Performance Status or Palliative Performance Score/Adapted Karnofsky.
- Weight loss (10%), decreasing anthropomorphic measurements, and decreasing serum albumin or cholesterol.
- Dependence on assistance for two or more ADLs.
- Dysphagia leading to inadequate intake or recurrent aspiration.
- Decline in systolic blood pressure to below 90 or progressive postural hypotension.
- Increasing ER visits or hospitalizations related to the hospice primary diagnosis.
- Decline in Functional Assessment Staging (FAST) for dementia.
- Progressive stage 3-4 pressure ulcer in spite of optimal care.

CARING FOR YOURSELF (Cont.)

- Be aware of your own personal limits, strengths, and needs. Don't extend yourself to the point of "no return".
- Forgive your mistakes, they are a big part of learning and do not reflect on your self-worth.
- Maintain good nutritional habits.
- Participate in regular physical exercise.
- Get plenty of daily rest and relaxation.
- Nurture your own intimate relationships. Laughter and sharing with good friends are necessary to maintaining a balance in your life.
- Know your talents and skills. Reaffirm yourself regularly. Know your priorities and what you value. "If you have three (3) months to live, what would you do?" You must love yourself first in order to love and care for others.
- Understand your motivation to help others with grief. **DO NOT USE WORK TO RESOLVE YOUR OWN GRIEF!**
- Have ongoing personal support systems.
- Learn to identify the way your body tells you that you are stressed.
- Learn all you can about time management.
- Know the difference between being empathetic and sympathetic.



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We're on the Web!
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Mission Statement

Hospice of the Twin Cities' mission is to enhance the quality of the lives of our patients and their families by providing respectful care based on maintaining dignity, alleviating physical, psychosocial, and spiritual suffering, advocating for fundamental rights, and affirming the sacred value of life.