



# HOSPICE INSIGHTS

Volume 95: Hospice Referrals Often Come Too Late

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It is common knowledge that late referrals to hospice prevent many terminally ill patients and their families from receiving the full benefit of hospice services. In 2004, 30% of the patients admitted to Hospice of the Twin Cities died within seven (7) days of admission. 50% of the patients admitted died within 21 days of admission.

These statistics are not limited to Hospice of the Twin Cities, but represent a national trend. Typically, Medicare views the hospice patient as having six months or less to live, an “appropriate” length of stay on hospice. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization states that “quality hospice care cannot be delivered in less than 90 days, and yet in 2003 the national average length of stay for hospice was only 55 days.

Why are these statistics so important? Because the average length of stay relates directly to the quality of end-of-life care hospice patients receive, which most often translates to the “quality of life” experienced by individuals receiving hospice care.

## ***Benefits of Timely Referrals:***

- Enables the hospice team to develop the best plan of care for the patient.
- Provides early intervention for pain and symptom management.
- Reduces the expense due to unnecessary aggressive care and acute care admissions at the end of life.
- Allows the hospice team to develop a relationship of trust with the patient, family, and the long-term care staff.
- Helps surviving family members cope with the loss of their loved one.
- Enables the hospice team to attain the measurable, desirable outcomes of hospice care, which are:
  - Self-determined life closure,
  - A safe and comfortable death, and
  - Effective grieving.

***“You matter...because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.”***

*Dame Cicely Saunders*

*Founder of the modern hospice movement*

## **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.*