

“Cancer is the 2nd most common cause of death in the United States. It accounts for nearly one of every four deaths. More than 1,500 people a day will die from cancer in America.”*

* American Cancer Society (2010)

When are Oncology Patients Appropriate for Hospice?

Any patient with advanced cancer may be appropriate for hospice care if the patient has a prognosis of six months or less should their illness run its natural course. It may be appropriate to initiate a hospice assessment if a patient has experienced one or any of the following:

- Disease with metastasis at presentation
- Multiple symptoms and other disease involvement
- Uncontrolled pain
- Progression from early stage of disease to metastatic disease
- Significant and/or unintentional weight loss
- Symptoms that impede adequate nutrition such as dry mouth or dysphagia
- Rapid fall in Palliative Performance Status in combination with other symptoms

- Documented clinical decline over the past six months
- Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group Performance Scale > 2
- Frequent hospitalizations, office or ER visits
- Serum albumin < 2.5 gm/dl
- Patient continues to decline in spite of definitive therapy

Note: The factors listed above are general medical guidelines and are not intended to be strict criteria. The decision to admit a patient to hospice is based on the clinical guidelines and each patient's unique needs.

Symptom Management

Hospice manages symptoms that affect a patient's quality of life, including but not limited to:

- Pain; profound weakness; dyspnea; nausea/vomiting
- Emotional distress such as anxiety or grief
- Spiritual or ethical issues that are related to the dying process
- Multi-system deterioration

Benefits

of Referring Your Patient to Hospice Care

Providing medications reduces the financial burden on the patient and family, thereby increasing patient and family satisfaction with your care

Intensive pain and symptom management which eliminates or reduces unnecessary hospitalizations/ER visits

Medications, DME and supplies provided, making the patient more compliant to their treatment plan

Family support and education relieves caregiver stress and exhaustion which decreases demands on your time

Ability to benefit from a full range of programs and services, including 24-hour access to care, psychosocial programs, volunteer services and grief counseling

