



GeriCare

Transcript - What you need to know about Palliative Care

Introduction to Palliative Care

World Health Organization defines Palliative care as:

An approach to improve quality of life of patients and their families facing problems associated with life-threatening illnesses through prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification, assessment and treatment of pain and other distressing problems be it physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

While illness weakens the patient's foundations, palliative care offers a stronger layer of support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death.

Anyone with life threatening illnesses can receive palliative care. These include patients with:

- Advanced cancer
- Chronic organ failure such as kidney, heart and liver failure
- Frailty related illness such as advanced dementia or Parkinson's Disease

Palliative care is provided to patients at their homes, in nursing homes, hospices, specialist clinics, community hospitals and acute hospitals.

There are various ways to achieve these aims by:

- Using medication to treat pain and other symptoms
- Supporting patients and families in complex decision making and advance care planning
- Providing psychosocial support to help patients and families in coping with illness as well as
- Offering grief and bereavement support

A multi-disciplinary team is essential to support patients and their loved ones. The team usually consists of doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, music and art therapists, dieticians and psychologists.

In conclusion, these are some general principles of palliative care:

1. Palliative care affirms life and regards dying as a normal process.
2. The intention of palliative care is neither to hasten nor postpone death.
3. Quality of care is enhanced through management of symptoms such as pain, nausea and vomiting, delirium and others.
4. Palliative care uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and families.

References

1. World Health Organisation. WHO definition of Palliative Care, 2020. Available at: <https://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/>
2. National Guidelines for Palliative Care, 2015. Available at: <https://singaporehospice.org.sg/site2019/wp-content/uploads/National-Guidelines-for-Palliative-Care-Revised-Ed.-Jan-2015.pdf>
3. Goh, LG. Palliative care overview. *The Singapore Family Physician*. 2016;42(3):24-30.