



## Addressing Dignified End-Of-Life Care

(NAPSA)—As medical advancements are helping to increase the average life expectancy rate, and technology has made it possible to artificially extend the lives of accident victims and the terminally ill, more and more Americans, their families and healthcare professionals are addressing the myriad of issues surrounding “end-of-life” care and support.

In response to the growing public demand for more end-of-life information and support for the terminally ill and their families, a wide range of government agencies, non-profit organizations, legislative bodies and others are expanding their efforts and programs directed at the topic.

“The end of life is a time that requires a comprehensive and hands-on type of medical care that takes into account all facets of the final stages of life for both patients and their families,” says James Zini, D.O., the 2001-2002 president of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and an ordained Christian minister. “For the osteopathic physician, that includes caring for the human spirit, which is one of the four tenets of the osteopathic philosophy.”

Topics which should be addressed—not just by older or seriously ill people, but by younger adults who wish to be prepared in case of sudden or unexpected accidents or serious illness—include:

- Advance directives—Legal written documents that instruct a doctor in the type of medical treatment and care a person does or does not want if they reach the point where they can no longer speak for themselves.

- Pain management—Effectively assessing, managing and treating the physical pain associated with terminal illness.

- Selecting care programs—For nearly all terminally ill patients, the time comes when curing the illness is no longer a viable alter-



**For terminally ill patients and their families, the final stages of life raises a number of issues.**

native. At that point, they must decide with their families if they are ready for palliative care, which provides comfort and maintains the highest possible quality of life for as long as life remains.

- Financial considerations—Experts recommend that families consult with their primary care physician, insurance carrier, lawyer, financial planner, accountant, appropriate governmental agencies and other experts to examine healthcare coverage and benefits that may be available.

- Organ donation—The demand for donated organs far outnumbers the supply. Because there are more than 25 different transplantable organs and tissues, each donor can potentially save and enhance the lives of up to 50 people.

“Compassionate support and understanding can help make a person’s final journey as comfortable, functional and dignified as possible,” says Dr. Zini.

D.O.s are fully licensed physicians able to prescribe medication and perform surgery. They treat people, not just symptoms.

To learn more about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit the American Osteopathic Association’s Web site at [www.aoa-net.org](http://www.aoa-net.org) or call toll-free 1-800-621-1773.