

Health Care News & Notes

Palliative Care: An Extra Layer Of Support For People Living With Serious Illness

(NAPSA)—As anyone who has or is caring for a loved one with a serious illness knows, managing care and treatment can be a round-the-clock effort that can put enormous strain on both the patient and the family. A specialized type of medical care called palliative care can help people living with a serious illness by alleviating pain, other symptoms and stress at the same time they are receiving treatment for their underlying disease.

Debbie, a hairdresser, business owner and grandmother, is just one of many people who has benefited from receiving palliative care. Debbie was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer that affects the bone marrow. One of the complications of Debbie's cancer was pain in her hands and feet. The pain made it difficult for her to handle everyday activities and became so debilitating that Debbie was not able to work for a year and a half. "The pain made me shut myself out, stay in my room," she said.

Debbie was referred to a palliative care team that included board-certified palliative care specialists and other specialists who focused on relieving the symptoms, discomfort and anxiety associated with her illness. Debbie's palliative care team worked with her to help control her pain, evaluate treatment options and provide emotional support.

The goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life for both the

patient and the family. "Palliative care can alleviate the toll that life with a serious illness can take on families," said Diane E. Meier, M.D., director of the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC), a national organization dedicated to increasing access to quality palliative care services. "Palliative care puts control and choice back in the hands of the patient and family, and it can extend patients' lives."

Five Things Palliative Care Can Do for Patients and Their Families

- Manage pain and other symptoms, such as nausea, fatigue, shortness of breath, sleep problems and depression
- Evaluate treatment options and establish treatment goals
- Explain what to expect throughout the illness
- Help you cope with worry, stress or depression
- Help with communication between you and your other doctors



Thanks to the palliative care team, Debbie has returned to work. The help and guidance offered by her palliative care team allowed her to gain the emotional and physical strength to carry on with her daily routine. "I would not be sitting in this chair right now if it wasn't for the program," Debbie said. "I feel I'm in the driver's seat."