



Palliative Care: Improving the Quality of Life for Caregivers and Veterans with Chronic Illness

Chronic illness can wear at the threads that hold a quality life together, for both the Veteran and caregiver. One of the primary guiding principles of palliative care is enhancing the quality of life for those who suffer from chronic illness and supporting and engaging the family and caregivers that care for them.

What is Palliative Care?

- Palliative care is specialized medical care for those suffering from chronic, severe, or life-limiting illnesses at any age or stage of illness.
- Palliative care is provided by a team of specialists, which may include a doctor, nurse, social worker, chaplain, and other medical professionals who provide consultation or work in conjunction with the Veteran's current medical providers.
- Palliative care may be considered when a Veteran has been diagnosed with a severe or chronic illness, for example, cancer, heart condition, lung disease, dementia, or kidney failure.
- Palliative care is best started early to enhance the quality of life throughout the illness.
- Veterans receiving palliative care are still actively receiving treatment meant to cure the illness.

What is the goal of Palliative Care?

Palliative care is patient-centered, meaning the care team supports the Veteran and their unique values, preferences, and needs to improve the quality of life for the individual. Goals include the following:

- To assist the Veteran in finding relief; from pain and other physical symptoms, and the emotional distress sometimes associated with serious illness and its treatment.
- To recognize and support the significant role of the Veteran's family and caregivers and include them in planning.

Every VA Facility has a CSP Team who assists with information and referrals. To learn more about PGCSS and caregiver services offered, visit us online:

www.caregiver.va.gov

VA Caregiver Support Line
☎ 1-855-260-3274 toll-free

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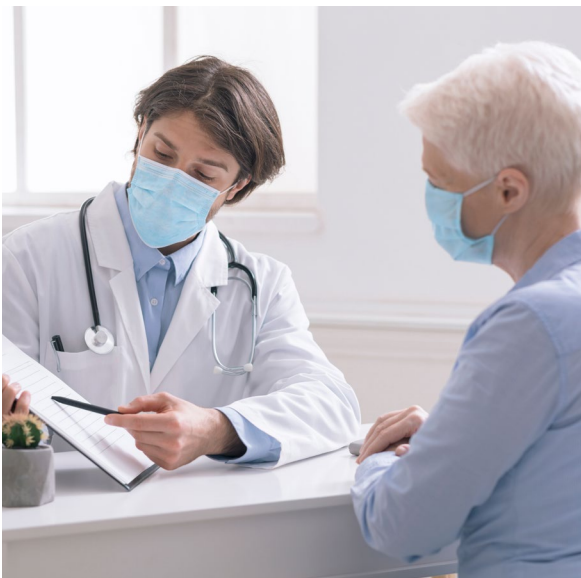


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- To provide support in coordinating and navigating the healthcare system and providers of the Veteran's care.
- To provide clear information to help guide the Veteran in making informed decisions about their healthcare, including understanding life-sustaining treatments and developing an advanced care plan.



[Conversation Guide for Patients and Caregivers for Identifying their Health Priorities](#) is dedicated to helping the Veteran make sure their health care lines up with their priorities.



Advance Care Planning

Every adult over 18 should understand the importance of advanced care planning. It is especially critical if they have been diagnosed with a chronic disease. Advance care planning ensures that healthcare providers and family members know what the patient considers necessary and their preferences for treatment now and in the future. If the patient becomes too sick to express their wishes or make health care decisions, a surrogate will be called upon to make the decisions on their behalf. If the patient wishes and identifies a person who can advocate for their wishes, if they cannot, designating a person to serve in this role through the completion of an Advance Directive allows everyone involved in the patient's care to clarify the next steps. Advance care planning documents are available through VA providers or by visiting [Advance Care Planning - Geriatrics and Extended Care](#). Non-Veterans may also want to visit <https://www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/> for more information.

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