

Home Care, Palliative Care or Hospice: Which Does Your Loved One Need?

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November reminds us to give thanks for our family and friends. It is also National Home Care, Hospice & Palliative Care Month, which honors nurses, home care aides, therapists, and social workers who make a huge difference in their patients' and families' lives.

While you're planning holiday meals and shopping for that perfect present, you probably don't want to think about illnesses, injuries and end-of-life matters. However, Kris Bellman, Clinical Supervisor at Putnam County HomeCare & Hospice in Ottawa, Ohio, says it's the

best time to think about the what-ifs, so you're prepared to find the right care for you or the ones you love should something happen.

"We hear from a lot of people who say that they didn't even know what our services were about until they needed them," said Bellman. "This is a great time to learn more and keep the information on hand to refer to if needed."

Home Care

Home care is just that -- care at home. "Maybe the patient has been in a car accident and is recuperating from their injuries or was in the hospital because of a stroke or heart failure, and now they are home," explained Bellman. "The goal of home care is to help the patient get better, regain their independence, and become as self-sufficient as possible, and then they are discharged back into the community."

Most patients prefer to recuperate at home versus a hospital or nursing facility, and this kind of care is less expensive and more convenient. It includes intermittent care, such as nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech therapy.

How often the therapists and nurses visit depends on the needs of the patient.

Palliative Care

When it comes to palliative care, Bellman said that people often confuse it with hospice care.

"Palliative care is a wonderful program that helps all spectrums of chronic illnesses, such as Alzheimer's disease, chronic kidney disease, heart failure," said Bellman. "Those diseases can last a long time and palliative care is meant to support the patients by working with their primary care physician to provide more support and treat symptoms that come along with chronic illnesses."

Many people also mistakenly believe that palliative care is for those who can't be cured. It is appropriate at any age and any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment. The team helps control your pain and symptoms of serious illness such as fatigue, anxiety, shortness of breath, nausea, depression, and constipation while improving your quality of life.

The palliative care team also helps you make difficult medical decisions, coordinates care with your other doctors, and helps you navigate the often complex healthcare system.

“Most importantly, by utilizing the palliative care team, it doesn’t mean you or your loved one has given up hope,” said Bellman. “In fact, palliative care can help you cope with aggressive treatments by getting your pain and symptoms under control to help you fight the disease.”

Hospice

Hospice is for those patients who have a terminal illness. “That means physicians said that the disease has run its course, and the patient has six months or less to live,” said Bellman.

Putnam County Hospice care includes nursing, social workers, volunteers, spiritual care and aides. We can see patients in their homes, nursing facilities, hospitals and assisted living centers.

The hospice team looks to manage pain and symptoms that occur when someone has a terminal illness. “Spiritually, we delve into what it means to be at the end of life and their spiritual views on it, and we'll give them guidance and support regardless of their denomination,” said Bellman.

The hospice social worker deals with the emotional needs of the family and the patient when they're going through the end of life process.

“We also have trained volunteer staff that can go into the home, visit with the patient, play cards with them, or read the Bible to them,” said Bellman.

Caring about your loved ones means more than finding the perfect gift this holiday season. It means knowing the right information and services that can improve their quality of life, especially if they live with a chronic condition, have been injured, or are at the end of their life. That’s the best gift you can give.

For more information, contact Putnam County HomeCare & Hospice, 575 Ottawa-Glandorf Road Suite #3 Ottawa, OH 45875. Call 419-523-4449 or visit <https://pchh.net/>.