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Quality care at the end of life



Unfortunately, one aspect of life that most of us don't like to consider is the end of it. Whether it is a life that is tragically taken too short or for a person who has lived a full and successful life, quality of care at the end of life is becoming increasingly important. Not only is it important for clinicians providing help for these persons with life-threatening diseases to know the type of care they want, but it is equally as important for the family to be open and aware, so that they know what matters most to the patient. The following newsletter discusses the importance of planning quality care at the end of life, as well as key factors to quality care.

Importance of Planning Quality Care¹

Over the past 30 years, there have been tremendous strides in recognizing the importance of the quality of care at the end of life. While in the past, most people involved, including caregivers, have tried to avoid discussing end of life wishes, it has been shown that advanced planning with family and friends makes it 12 times more likely that a patient will share and have their final wishes carried-out with their physicians.

Deciding upon the type of care that a patient would want at the end of life is vital to discuss with family and friends, who will more than likely be at the bedside making some of these decisions. For those who may not have family or friends, written or oral directives with the patient's physician may be most effective. Directives should be as specific as possible, as often they are very subjective; for example, what does it mean for "no chance of survival"?

Planning and talking about issues surrounding the type of care that a patient would want at the end of life helps to ensure that any final wishes will be carried

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out. Without this planning, many questions can remain uncertain to family and friends, who may also be struggling during this difficult time.

Keys to Quality Care²

When deciding upon care for someone during their final stages of life, it's important to keep some key information in mind. The following are some keys to ensuring quality care:

- Begin the conversation about your loved one's final wishes. If talking may be too difficult, filling out a form to direct their final wishes may be helpful, especially for those who may struggle to find their voice.
- Discuss wishes of your loved one, family and friends. Honor these wishes for your loved one.- Discussing even before there is a need helps to make it more likely that final wishes will be carried out.
- Help make your loved one as comfortable as possible.
- Make sure to care for yourself, as this difficult time can be overwhelming for all.



The end of life care is difficult for all those involved, but most importantly for the patient. Communication during this complicated time proves to be one of the most important factors in helping to guarantee quality care. It also is vital that all those involved take care of themselves during such a trying time. Overall, while the openness of discussing the end of life is still a growing topic, it's also important to recognize that there is no one single best method to approaching this topic.

Advantage EAP is a benefit provided by your employer. There are counselors with Advantage EAP who have the training and experience to help with these issues.

Please contact your Advantage EAP at:

(540) 989-6605 or 800-699-9396

Or visit our website at: www.psychhealthroanoke.com

Or our Blog at: <http://psychhealthroanoke.blogspot.com/>

Resources from this newsletter:

- 1) <http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2008/07/4117/discussion-key-end-life-care-planning-study-finds>
- 2) <http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2008/07/4117/discussion-key-end-life-care-planning-study-finds>