

# Palliative Care Helps Individuals and Families Navigate Serious Illnesses

The word “palliative” isn’t a word you hear every day. But Hospice and Palliative Care of Western Kentucky is trying to change that. Their in-home palliative care program is for individuals with a chronic or serious disease, and is designed to help with pain and symptom management- ensuring their patients are comfortable and able to enjoy life to the fullest. Palliative simply means providing relief from the symptoms and/or pain related to a disease.

“Several years ago we identified a gap in services for patients who had chronic illness, but didn’t have a diagnosis that warranted hospice care,” said Donna Fitzgerald, Hospice and Palliative Care Chief Clinical Officer. “We started offering palliative care to help manage symptoms and improve the quality of life for those patients. Having symptoms controlled can also mean fewer trips to the emergency room, which really is a benefit to our patients and families.”

Belinda Blair, Hospice and Palliative Care of Western Kentucky’s Chief Executive Officer, says education about palliative care is key. “We get many questions from people in the community about our Palliative Care program. Some think it’s the same as our hospice services. But that isn’t the case. While both palliative care and hospice care provide symptom relief, our Palliative Care program is designed for those



with serious illnesses who don’t have a terminal diagnosis.” And unlike the patients under hospice care, those receiving palliative care services may also be seeking aggressive treatments for their disease.

“We know dealing with a chronic disease can be difficult. It’s taxing on both the patient and their family. Our program is designed to help them navigate those waters - they’re able to function with less pain and fewer symptoms. At the end of the day, we want them to feel that they are controlling their disease, rather than their disease controlling them,” Blair added.

The program also includes 24/7 access to a nurse. “Our patients love being able to call all hours of the day or night, and getting to speak with a person,” stated Fitzgerald. “They know they aren’t alone if they have any issues –if something happens in the middle of the night – their palliative care team is available to help.”

As the population ages, it’s likely that more people will benefit from their Palliative Care program. “Just recently, we’ve seen the number of patients rise,” Fitzgerald noted. “We have been trying to get the word out about this program. We know there are many people that could benefit, and we just want to see them living the best life possible.”

Anyone can make a referral to the Palliative Care program. “Many family members contact us,” Fitzgerald stated. “It doesn’t hurt to have someone assess a loved-one to see if in-home palliative care might benefit them. It’s as easy as making a phone call”.

In addition to palliative care, Hospice and Palliative Care of Western Kentucky offers hospice care for individuals with a terminal diagnosis, and bereavement care for families and community members. To contact them for more information, call 270-926-7565 or visit their websites [hospiceofwky.org](http://hospiceofwky.org) and [pcowfky.org](http://pcowfky.org).

**Facing the storm of chronic illness can be  
CONFUSING and SCARY. Let our palliative care team  
help you navigate these stormy waters.**

**In-home Nurse Practitioner visits and 24/7 access to a nurse!**



**PALLIATIVE  
CARE** of Western Kentucky

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Palliative Care supports the needs of individuals with a serious or chronic illness. Call now to see how we can help.