

Considerations for Providing Palliative Care

Palliative care may **improve**¹⁻⁴:

- Symptom management
- Quality of life and survival rates
- Patient satisfaction and mood
- Recognition of caregiver needs through collaborative interaction with the health care team

Palliative care may **reduce**¹⁻⁴:

- Depression and symptom burden
- Total cost of care
- Resource utilization near end of life

There are a number of challenges to the delivery of palliative care, including^{2,5-7}:

Timely provision of care

- Lack of awareness
- Provider reluctance to refer patient to a specialist
- Reluctance of patient and/or family to discuss palliative care
- Restrictive palliative care service program eligibility criteria

Inconsistent implementation

- Varied definitions of palliative care
- Lacking awareness of standards or resources
- Lack of time and training of all health care professionals in palliative care

Patient-provider communication

- Seriously ill patients not wanting to discuss end-of-life preferences
- Failure to address the prognosis and goals of care

Palliative care standards and guidelines for quality^{8,9}

When initiating palliative care for a patient, it is important to recognize and consider the standards to which care should be maintained.

Clinical practice guidelines:

- National Consensus Project (NCP) Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care
- 2016 Commission on Cancer, Cancer Program Standards: Ensuring Patient-Centered Care
- 2017 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Clinical Practice Guideline Update

Program standards and certifications:

- American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) Cancer Program Standards
- The Joint Commission (JCo) Advanced Certification for Palliative Care
- Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) Distinction in Palliative Care
- Community Health Accreditation Partner (CHAP) Palliative Care Certification Standards

Quality reporting programs and incentives:

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Payment Program (QPP) and Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS)
- Anthem and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Quality Hospital Incentive Program (QHIP)
- Palliative Care Quality Collaborative (PCQC) and a national palliative care registry

Professional certifications for providing palliative care services:

- American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) Subspecialty Certification in Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Certificate of Added Qualification in Hospice and Palliative Medicine

Key Takeaways

- Palliative care may offer patients and their support systems a range of benefits, including enhanced quality of life and resource optimization.
- Health care providers, patients, and caregivers should consider the challenges associated with palliative care implementation and administration.
- The provision of palliative care should be upheld to standards set by clinical practice guidelines, program and provider certifications, and quality reporting programs.

References

1. McAteer R, Wellbery C. Palliative care: benefits, barriers, and best practices. *Am Fam Physician*. 2013;18(12):811-813.
2. Holcombe D, Kinzbrunner B. NAMCP medical directors spotlight guide: palliative care in oncology. *J Manag Care Med*. 2015;18(4):1-40.
3. Temel J, Greer J, Muzikansky A, et al. Early palliative care for patients with metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer. *N Engl J Med*. 2010;363:733-742.
4. Rocque G, Dionne-Odom N, Huang S, et al. Implementation and impact of patient lay navigator-led advance care planning conversations. *J Pain Symp Mgmt*. 2017;53(4):682-692.
5. Hawley P. Barriers to access to palliative care. *Palliat Care*. 2017;10:1-6.
6. Wright M, Wood J, Lynch T, Clark D. Mapping levels of palliative care development: a global view. *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2008;35(5):469-485.
7. Mack JW, Weeks J, Wright A, Block S, Prigerson H. End-of-life discussions, goal attainment, and distress at the end of life: predictors and outcomes of receipt of care consistent with preferences. *J Clin Oncol*. 2010;28(7):1203-1208.
8. Center to Advance Palliative Care. Defining and measuring quality. Accessed April 22, 2020. <https://www.capc.org/defining-and-measuring-quality>
9. CMS. Quality payment program overview. Accessed May 23, 2021. <https://qpp.cms.gov/about/qpp-overview>

