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## Tagline

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## “10 Things Seniors Should Know about Hospice”

Noting that some families may not use hospice because they are unaware of its benefits or misunderstand how it works, the national magazine *U.S. News & World Report* recently featured an article titled “10 Things Seniors Should Know about Hospice.” When families have time to prepare for the death of a loved one, hospice care can “simplify life” by “providing myriad support services,” states the author of the article. The 10 things experts want seniors and their families to know about hospice include:

### 1. Hospice is not a place, but a type of care.

While some hospices have inpatient centers, hospice care refers to a type of comprehensive comfort care that can be provided to a patient and family wherever the patient lives. This could be at home, in an assisted living facility, in a nursing home, or any place a patient calls “home.”

### 2. Medicare has a hospice benefit.

For seniors who receive Medicare, hospice services are covered almost completely. Check with your local hospice to learn full details of this coverage.

### 3. Enrollment is for patients with a life expectancy of six months or less.

To enroll in hospice care, your doctor and a hospice doctor will certify your prognosis, based on their best estimates.

### 4. If you live longer, that’s okay.

Since estimating prognosis is difficult with many diseases, you can be recertified to receive hospice if you outlive original expectations. “People don’t need to worry about losing their coverage.”

### 5. It isn’t only for those with certain illnesses.

Many people think hospice mainly serves cancer patients. But hospice serves those with any terminal illness, whether Alzheimer’s, COPD, end-stage kidney disease, general debility, and others.

### 6. Hospice is about more than medical care.

A key part of hospice “is the support services they provide to family members,” the article points out. “Once people are able to stop juggling appointments or worrying about the logistics of their care, they may find their quality of life increases.”

### 7. Services continue after someone dies.

The grief support services offered to family members provides much-needed emotional support following a loved one’s death.

### 8. You can choose the hospice you want.

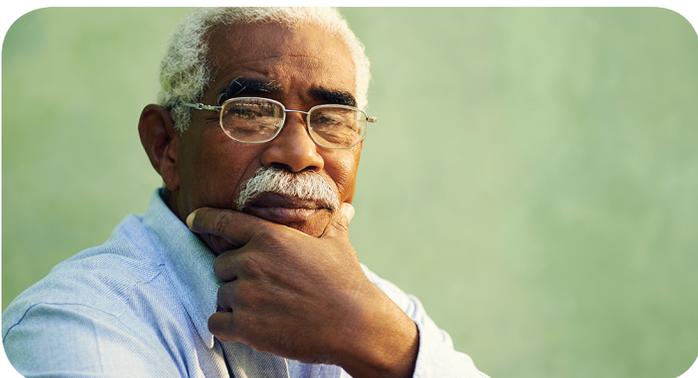
There are thousands of hospices nationwide. If there is more than one hospice provider where you live, you can choose which hospice you want to oversee your care.

### 9. More transparency may be coming to hospice organizations.

The government is moving toward having Medicare publish quality measures for hospice organizations, similar to consumer information now publicly available for nursing homes.

### 10. Hospice is focused on life, not death.

Hospice care “is focused on quality of life,” the article states. It is “intended to help people live fully and comfortably in the time they have left.”



## Hospice Information for Patients and Families

### Whether a Patient Has Cancer or Heart Failure, Caregivers Are Pleased with Hospice Care

A recent national study has found that caregivers of patients who have heart failure are just as satisfied with hospice care as caregivers of cancer patients.

Many people think hospice is mostly for patients with advanced cancer, but statistics show that noncancer diagnoses — including heart disease such as end-stage heart failure — far outnumber cancer diagnoses for those who enroll in hospice care.

Through the decades since hospice care first began in the U.S., reports have shown that families of patients with cancer give high marks to hospice care when it comes to important things like managing symptoms.

But because symptom management is sometimes different and more complex for patients dying of heart failure, the researchers of this recent study wanted to see if families of those patients were just as happy with the overall services of hospice as families of patients who were dying of cancer.

Among the thousands of caregivers they studied across the U.S., regardless if their loved one had cancer or heart failure, the researchers found that nearly 95% were satisfied with symptom management, and about 75% said they would rate the hospice care they received as “excellent.”

“Half of heart patients will die within five years of diagnosis, leaving behind family caregivers who will experience long-term effects from end-of-life caregiving experiences,” the study authors note. This makes these patients “an ideal population for hospice to reach.”

The researchers, whose study appeared in the *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, also share with readers, “These findings underscore the important role hospice plays in shaping the experiences of heart failure caregivers at vulnerable times in their lives.”

### “Speak Up: Tips for Your Doctor’s Visit” Available to Download for Free

A series of free, downloadable patient brochures coordinated by The Joint Commission can help families navigate the many healthcare options available when facing a serious illness.

With the theme of “Speak Up,” all 20 brochures are available for free download in either English or Spanish at [www.jointcommission.org/topics/speakup\\_brochures.aspx](http://www.jointcommission.org/topics/speakup_brochures.aspx).

The brochure, “Speak Up: Tips for Your Doctor’s Visit,” includes patient tips on thinking and asking about end-of-life care when getting ready for an appointment with your doctor. Suggestions for patients considering care near the end of life featured in the brochure include:

- Involve your family
- Find out about the benefits and burdens of any treatment

- Make decisions based on what is best for you
- Share your decisions with your family and healthcare team
- Ask if you can get hospice care to help you with side effects or symptoms of your illness or treatments

Another brochure recently added to the series is “Speak Up: What You Need to Know about Your Serious Illness and Palliative Care.”

“Hospice palliative care is an essential component of the healthcare system, helping patients and families well before the final days of life, from diagnosis through the course of an illness, through death and grief with an ongoing focus on compassion and quality,” says a spokesperson for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, one of the professional organizations sponsoring the series.

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**Hospice Name**

**Street**

**City, State, ZIP**

**Phone**

**[www.website.com](http://www.website.com)**