

Five reasons to call hospice sooner

(Submitted by Harbor Hospice)

"Entering hospice care is not about death, but about living and enhancing the quality of life of your loved one," said Mary Anne Gorman, Executive Director of Harbor Hospice. "The staff at Harbor Hospice listens to what is important to patients and focuses on helping them identify and reach their personal goals and wishes."

Many former patients and their families encourage getting the hospice care team in place early on to help relieve the stress of dealing with many unknowns. Harbor Hospice coordinates all the resources — including medications, home medical equipment such as hospital beds, and assistance with personal care, social work and spiritual support — so patients can feel as good as they can for as long as they can. Here are five of the many benefits of earlier referral and admission to hospice.

Quality of Life – Patients are encouraged to conserve their energy for the things that matter most to them. By providing practical tips and resources on topics such as nutritional support, health care equipment and home oxygen, hospice can have a very positive effect on conserving patients' energy for the things they want to do.

Financial benefits for patients and families — Financial relief to the patient and family is another benefit for involving hospice sooner. Due to the comprehensive nature of the hospice benefit through Medicare and most private insurance, services that otherwise would be subject to co-pays or proof of medical necessity are offered as part of the whole package at no additional cost to the patient. The level and intensity of the service is determined with the patient by the clinical hospice team, ensuring patients' individual care needs and preferences are met.

After-hours emergency response and crisis management — Because Harbor Hospice shares its patients' goals to stay at home and avoid unnecessary trips to the ER or unwanted hospitalizations, a hospice physician and RN are on call to address after-hours emergencies. Many crises can be resolved by phone, but staff does not hesitate to make home visits in the evening, middle of the night, on weekends or holidays. If additional care or treatment is needed and can only be provided in an inpatient setting, the hospice team will coordinate the transitions for that care in the Poppen Hospice Residence, a home-like residence with 14 private rooms.

Patient safety and security — The hospice team helps patients and families deal with the challenges near life's end, including diminished mobility and strength. They also anticipate when additional care is needed to keep the patient safe and make care at home possible. The practical assistance offered by having a walker, wheelchair, shower chair or electronic bed available is invaluable.

Medication management — Harbor Hospice nurses, who are certified in hospice and palliative care, are skilled in helping patients adjust their medication to obtain the best effect. They take time to listen to patients' concerns and answer their questions. Their preferences are important to ensure the right balance of medication and patient comfort.

"As a community-based, non-profit organization, Harbor Hospice has a strong commitment and special responsibility to serve all in need of hospice care," said Gorman. "The hospice staff will respectfully and carefully explain the financial requirements for hospice care and always end with the question, 'How can we help?' Just pick up the phone and call before it is too late. No matter the situation, we will provide care to all regardless of their ability to pay."

Harbor Hospice understands that navigating through the health care system can be challenging, especially during stressful times. Let hospice help take some of the stress away by contacting Harbor Hospice at 1-800-497-9559 or visit the website at www.harborhospicemi.org.

Harbor Hospice provides comprehensive care for seriously and terminally ill patients and resources for their families that allow them to enjoy the time they have left while feeling as good as they can for as long as they can. Harbor Hospice care offers specialized healthcare with expertise in pain and symptom management, emotional support and spiritual care, as well as grief counseling for family members anticipating or following the death of their loved one. Harbor Hospice has served the Western Michigan lakeshore community longer than any other hospice provider in the region. •

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Donna
Mike's wife

The sooner you call, the more our experienced team can help those with life-limiting illnesses feel as good as they can, for as long as they can.

"Everyone is so caring and concerned. They cared not only for Mike, but for our whole family. The nurses, the aides, the spiritual leaders, they were all just wonderful.

"They made the whole journey a learning experience for us, and one that we were so blessed to be a part of."

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