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Hospice: A Four Letter Word

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Hospice: A Four Letter Word ShowMe Times

Age Spots by Jackie Dover

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At a recent meeting, a hospice provider gave a presentation about their services. She spoke about many myths about hospice and also the benefit people experience from using hospice. Hospice care is a much underutilized program that is paid for by Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurance.

Hospice care covers doctor and nursing services, medical equipment, some prescriptions and many more services. One of the amazing aspects of hospice is that it provides emotional and spiritual support for the patient and their family. These services are provided at a time when most patients and their families need the services the most, at the end of life.

Hospice care is for people with a life expectancy of 6 months or less (if the disease runs its normal course). If you live longer than 6 months, you can still get hospice care, as long as the hospice medical director or other hospice doctor re-certifies that you're terminally ill (with a life expectancy of 6 months or less).

When telling us about their hospice program the presenter was asked what she would like people to know about hospice. She responded that she wished more people understood all the benefits, hospice has to offer. It's not for people who have given up on life; it's for those who want the best quality of life possible, for as long as possible. The earlier someone is on hospice the more support they receive. She also stated she wished people would just ask questions, start a conversation. Hospice isn't a four letter word we should be scared to talk about. It's a program that offers peace and comfort.

Many hospice programs also offer palliative care for those who have chronic illnesses or injuries; this program is not dependent upon prognosis. Palliative care works with you, your family and doctors to give you complete care and support in managing your illness. Palliative care can help lower hospital readmission rates, address your emotional and spiritual concerns and those of your caregivers and improve your quality of life during your illness.

If you have questions please contact a local hospice provider or call our office, Aging Matters, 1-800-392-8771 or 573-335-3331.

Information for this article can be found in the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services booklet Medicare Hospice Benefits CMS Product No. 02154.

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