



## Starting the hospice conversation

### *Tips for Physicians*

No one is ever fully prepared to have a conversation about death. It's sad and difficult for loved ones of a person reaching the end-of-life as well as for patient's physician who has been focused on helping that person recover or improve.

No one wants to hear, "There is nothing more that can be done," and with hospice as an option that statement is never true. A cure might not be possible, but it's important each individual faced with that reality know that there is still more life ahead.

The best thing for our patients is for them to have the best quality of life possible, for as long as possible – and when a cure is no longer possible, hospice is available to offer care and support.

At VNA Community Healthcare & Hospice, we offer symptom management while also supporting the social and spiritual needs of people helping them to live their best possible lives in the time remaining.

The best way to broach the topic of hospice with a patient is to put all the cards on the table and have an honest discussion about the person's prognosis and the complications of their current condition, such as frequent ER visits and hospital stays, side effects of their illness or treatment such as infections, pain and shortness of breath, and the overall stress and fear they are feeling.

It's important for a patient considering hospice care to know what their options are and that they will not be alone. Focus on the following points:

- There is not a cure for your condition, so let's focus on the things we can control and that includes making sure you feel as well as possible and can make the most of the time you have left
- The hospice team will help you to maintain as much independence and dignity as possible for as long as possible so you can have the best possible quality of life
- Because of hospice, you'll have better control of your symptoms and be able to stay at home
- I am still part of your care team and you can still reach me if you have concerns or questions
- You aren't going to live as long as you want, but you'll be able to enjoy the life you have left with your loved ones

VNA Community Healthcare & Hospice is happy to be part of this conversation with patients or have it with patients on your behalf if you've decided to refer a patient for services.

To make a referral, call 866.862.0888.