



A PRIMER ON HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

Question: I recently learned that hospice and palliative care are included in my insurance benefits, but I'm not certain I understand the difference.

Answer: Hospice care has been around since the mid-1900s. It can be understood as a specialized approach to care for the terminally ill. The approach focuses on comfort—both physical and spiritual—for the patient and the family, delivered by a team of highly trained clinicians, volunteers and clergy. The team essentially helps the patient prepare for death, whether that means getting financial and legal affairs in order, making peace with past hurts or simply helping provide pain-free quality of life for the last few weeks of life. Hospice care may be necessary for only a few days or may last for a year or longer. The median length of care is about 19 days.

Palliative care focuses on living comfortably with a chronic condition without cure-centered treatment. A palliative care team works creatively to find ways to palliate, or mitigate, symptoms without aggressive treatment that may be futile, uncomfortable (think side effects), stressful and expensive. Like hospice,

maintaining quality of life is the focus. Some palliative care patients receive help for years, while others transition to hospice within a few months.

With both approaches, the patient's wishes are expressed, documented and honored. Care is provided wherever the patient will be most comfortable and can receive adequate care. Usually this occurs at home, but hospice and palliative care are possible in hospitals, nursing homes and some assisted-living facilities.

For insurance benefits, read your explanation of benefits thoroughly. Medicare is used as the standard for all hospice reimbursement models, and there are different levels of care. Under Medicare, hospice benefits can be renewed by the doctor every six months. Medicare HMOs must offer the same level of benefits as Medicare. Most private insurance offers some level of hospice and palliative care.

Thank you for inquiring about such an important and sensitive subject.

Sources: The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization has multiple resources available at no cost. Read or download at <http://www.nhpco.org/>.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

**Why didn't Noah fish very often?
He only had two worms.**

—A *Prairie Home Companion* Pretty
Good Joke Book

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

Go Green!

Receive Social Services Corner by email.
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Do you or does someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or visit www.wrpioneers.org to find out more about our assistance programs.



SHORT-TERM THERAPY, LONG-TERM BENEFIT



Call it therapy, counseling, support or treatment, but almost everyone needs some professional help sometimes. During life's rough patches, emotional challenges or times

of transition, talking to a qualified mental health professional can be one of the most rewarding and healthful decisions you can make. But many adults avoid this treatment (called "psychotherapy" or "talk therapy") for a variety of reasons, such as embarrassment, cost, fear or time constraints. Some folks also believe that therapy doesn't work or that they don't need it.

Another possible reason that adults avoid psychotherapy is that they don't want to feel obligated to attend a weekly session in perpetuity. If the prospect of a long-term commitment to therapy is keeping you from seeking help, you should know about solution-focused brief therapy. In brief therapy, the mental health professional assists the client in developing goals and identifying resources that can be put in place to meet those goals. Unlike psychoanalysis,

solution-focused brief therapy does not ask you to recount your life history or seek a cure for a chronic mental health condition. It guides you to overcome the hurdle that is keeping you from a fulfilling life now.

Oftentimes brief therapy can help prevent emotional problems from growing into a more severe mood problem. Even if you have previously been in long-term therapy, sometimes a little "touch up" may be just enough to make you feel better for a long time.

As for payment, psychotherapy is covered under Medicare Part B and most secondary insurance plans. There is no need to feel embarrassed, ashamed or fearful. A professional therapist should never let you come away from a phone call or a session feeling that way. If you don't "click" with one therapist, find another.

The social workers at Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers invite you to benefit from our short-term therapy services. Availability is often over the phone, at your convenience, for a limited number of sessions and always confidential. You can reach our social workers at (888) 994-3863, ext. 2390, or email socialservices@wrmail.org.

Sources: "Psychotherapies" at the National Institutes of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov. "Solution-Focused Brief Therapy," Chris Iveson, *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* (2002), Vol. 8, pp. 149–157.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF'S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Center for Auto Safety, www.autosafety.org, (202) 328-7700

The Center for Auto Safety, a national nonprofit organization, analyzes motor vehicle and highway safety. Its website offers information regarding auto defects, fuel economy, lemon laws, filing complaints and more.

www.ConsumerReports.org

The mission of Consumer Reports is to work for a fair and safe consumer marketplace and to empower consumers to protect themselves. The Consumer Reports website and publications are available to help consumers make informed choices. To maintain impartiality, Consumer Reports accepts no advertising and employs several hundred mystery shoppers and technical experts to buy and test the products it evaluates.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“What constitutes a life well spent?
Love and admiration from your fellow men
is all that anyone can ask.”

—Will Rogers

To view our entire National Resource Directory, please visit www.wrpioneers.org.