



WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT END OF LIFE CARE

To Your Health (Gazette-Times, Democrat-Herald)
May 2007
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No one wants life to end, but the fact is that life will come to an end for each of us at some point.

Benton Hospice Service is an option for those with life-limiting illnesses who choose to remain at home—in comfort, dignity, and control.

Benton Hospice Service began serving patients in 1980. Since that time, BHS has helped over 2,700 terminally ill people and their families.

Hospice may be the right choice when the ability to carry on with routine, daily tasks is diminishing with little hope for improvement. Maybe you're making too many trips to the doctor or the emergency room. Perhaps the treatments for the illness are becoming burdensome and may not be effective or desirable anymore.

It is difficult to predict exactly how long someone may have left to live. To be eligible for hospice a doctor has to believe it is likely the patient will die within six months if the illness were to run its natural course.

Fortunately, the doctor doesn't have to be right: there is no penalty for underestimating survival. At BHS, we often serve patients much longer than six months. Sometimes people do so well under hospice care they are discharged and go on to live for months or years.

Too many people wait until their last few days to come to hospice. At BHS, we recognize and respect the physical and emotional challenges of coping with a terminal illness and understand that accepting it takes time.

However, BHS also knows that people receive the best care when they choose hospice care at the earliest appropriate time in their illness.

Hospice supports people and their families by providing a wide range of services. A team of professionals and volunteers supplements care for the terminally ill person. Nurses, social workers, home health aides, spiritual counselors, a variety of therapists, and a person's own physician make up the care team.

Admission to hospice usually saves people money. Medicare, the Oregon Health Plan, and many private insurance policies pay for all care related to the terminal illness. This includes visits by all members of the care team, medications, equipment and supplies, and counseling and bereavement services. People typically find hospice a huge financial relief.

Because of the generous contributions from our community, Benton Hospice Service is also able to provide care for those without insurance. No one is turned away for lack of money.

If there is a complaint about hospice, it is that families wish their loved one had been admitted sooner. There are a variety of reasons why someone might wait, but when you know that hospice is about hope, about honoring patients' choices about how they want to live their final days, about providing comfort and managing pain and symptoms associated with an illness, it makes sense to take advantage of the services hospice offers at the earliest appropriate time.