Palliative Care

Palliative care is also referred to as hospice palliative care or end-of-life care. It is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families who face problems associated with life-threatening illness. The focus of palliative care is on achieving comfort, ensuring respect for the person facing death and maximizing the quality of life for the patient, family and loved ones.

Palliative care services provide care by:
- Managing pain and other symptoms through work with a team of experts
- Planning with a team approach to care for your loved one
- Helping patients live as actively as possible until death
- Enhancing quality of life, and may also positively influence the course of illness
- Affirming life and regards dying as a normal process; intends neither to hasten or postpone death
- Providing emotional, spiritual and cultural support for all members of the family
- Providing practical supports such as home care services and/or respite care, to give caregivers some relief
- Ongoing bereavement support after the death of a loved one

Hospice palliative care is offered in a variety of places including hospitals, at home, nursing homes and freestanding hospice facilities.

Why is it important?
As a caregiver, you play an extremely significant role in ensuring both physical and emotional well-being through the journey and at the end of your loved one's life. It is important that you, your loved one, and your loved one's health care provider talk about what quality of life means and plan together to achieve this. You will need to consider your loved one's care needs, your own ability to provide care in a home or hospital setting, what support services are available and accessible, and availability of home care, hospital care or hospice facilities.

Who Provides Services
A team of caregivers usually provides palliative and end-of-life care services. The team may include nurses, physicians, social workers, spiritual advisors, bereavement support workers and trained volunteers. Ask your doctor, or other health care professional (Nurse Practitioner or Nurse) for further information. The hospital discharge planner or local homecare organization can also assist to help find the services that will help you and your loved one.

References