

MEDIA TALKING POINTS - HOSPICE

PRIMARY MESSAGES:

- Hospice care provides humane and comforting support for terminally ill patients and their families, including pain control, palliative medical care, and social, emotional and spiritual services.
- Hospice fulfills basic human needs of feeling comfortable in familiar surroundings and of attaining physical and emotional peace during the last stage of life.
- Over 114,000 professionals and hundreds of thousands of volunteers (providing work equivalent of 56,000 FTEs) provide comforting and supportive hospice services to approximately 1.5 million patients and their families in an estimated 3,800 hospice programs throughout the United States.
- Many individuals are not aware of advances in pain control and the care options available to individuals of all ages, races, and backgrounds that are nearing the end of life.

SECONDARY MESSAGES:

Potential media questions and suggested answers:

Who Pays for Hospice Care?

Hospice services are covered by Medicare, the Medicaid programs of 48 states and the District of Columbia, and most private insurance and managed care plans. In addition, military personnel and their dependents can receive hospice under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS). Hospices heavily rely on grants and community support to fund services for patients with little or no insurance.

Who Is Eligible for Hospice?

A person is eligible for hospice under the Medicare Hospice Benefit once he or she is certified by a physician as having a terminal illness with a life expectancy of six months or less. Hospice is available to all terminally ill individuals and their families regardless of their age, gender, race, nationality, creed, sexual orientation, physical condition, or ability to pay. Although about 1/3 of the patients admitted to hospice agencies had conditions related to cancer, other frequent admission diagnoses included heart and lung disease, AIDS, and neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and Lou Gehrig's disease.

What Are the Advantages of Hospice?

- Hospice treats the person instead of the disease, focuses on the family instead of just the individual, and emphasizes the quality of life instead of its duration.
- Hospice care allows terminally ill patients and their families to experience the end of life together, in the comfort and security of home or a home-like setting.
- Hospice uses the combined knowledge and skills of an interdisciplinary team of professionals, including physicians, nurses, home care aides, social workers, spiritual caregivers, counselors, and volunteers.
- Hospice care is a cost effective alternative to services provided in hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutional settings.
- Hospice is the preferred choice of health care delivery for the terminally ill and their families.