

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is palliative care?**

Palliative care is interdisciplinary care that aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life for patients with a life-threatening illness and their families. Expert control of pain and symptoms and practical support for patient and family is integrated into every stage of illness along with all other appropriate medical treatments. Hospital-based palliative care programs structure a variety of resources, including medical and nursing specialists, social workers, and chaplains, into coordinated teams that function within consult services, dedicated inpatient units, outpatient clinics, or other delivery systems and community partnerships appropriate to each institution's needs.

### **Why hospital-based palliative care?**

Fundamental shifts in the nature of today's population have forced hospitals to face new challenges. As medical advances allow people to live longer, chronic illness is transforming the demand for medical services. While acute care has historically been the prevailing focus of hospital care, today an increasing number of patients require long-term management of complex and multiple chronic illnesses.

Because they are rooted in a health care system structured to provide acute care, many institutions are hard-pressed to deliver well-managed, high-quality care for those with debilitating chronic and life-threatening illnesses. Hospitals are working to overcome the fragmentation of the health care system to better serve the needs of these patients and to balance services for episodic, acute illness with whole-patient care responsive to ongoing medical needs over time.

Hospital-based palliative care programs are enabling leading hospitals to provide patients with coordinated, effective, and efficient care. As a result, the number of academic, community, and faith-based hospitals instituting palliative care services continues to grow rapidly with strong and successful track records in:



- Improving patient outcomes through expert pain and symptom control
- Expediting communication and decision-making for patients, family members, and health care providers
- Increasing coordination among health care providers
- Easing patient transitions between care settings
- Boosting patient and family satisfaction and hospital loyalty
- Reducing the burden of time-intensive and complex cases to improve staff satisfaction and retention
- Applying a more systematic approach to outlier (long length of stay) patients
- Promoting beneficial care, resulting in more appropriate use of hospital resources, cost avoidance, and improved bed capacity
- Meeting Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) quality, training, and accreditation requirements

*A Guide to Building a Hospital-Based Palliative Care Program* is intended to help hospitals, health systems, and health care partners establish and sustain hospital-based palliative care programs.

This *Guide* focuses on the provision of palliative care in the broadest sense, that is, availability of palliative care throughout the course of an illness whether or not cure is possible, and without regard to prognosis. However, program planners must also become familiar with the availability of hospice services within a hospital's inpatient setting and in the surrounding community to better identify palliative care resources and partners, and to understand the role of home-based and inpatient hospice in effective discharge planning and continuity of care. Appendix H provides a summary of Inpatient Hospice Care.

### **About CAPC**

This *Guide* was developed by the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC), a national initiative supported by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with direction and technical assistance provided by Mount Sinai School of Medicine. CAPC is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the availability of quality palliative care services in hospitals and other health care settings for people with life-threatening conditions, their families, and caregivers. CAPC provides hospitals and other health care settings with the training, tools, and technical assistance to start and sustain successful palliative care programs. More information on CAPC's resources is available on the CAPC web site, [www.capc.org](http://www.capc.org).

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## About this Guide

*A Guide to Building a Hospital-Based Palliative Care Program* was developed by the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) to help palliative care proponents establish successful, lasting programs in their hospital.

Across the continuum, patient and family palliative care needs must be met by a genuine and collaborative partnership among all providers including hospitals, hospices, long term care facilities, and home health agencies. Close coordination between palliative care providers is critical to achieving continuity of care throughout the full course of an illness and across the continuum of care settings. Hospice brings a long history of expertise in the provision of palliative care and offers much to the hospital-based palliative care movement. Hospitals will benefit from partnerships with local hospices as valuable program resources as well as care partners for patients returning to the community who need palliative care.

Successful hospital-based palliative care programs require strong leadership within the hospital. While *A Guide to Building a Hospital-Based Palliative Care Program* may be useful to any proponent seeking to establish palliative care services, the focus of this publication is on a hospital audience. References to the planning team, administrators, financial specialists, and the like will typically refer to professionals working within the hospital. Likewise, policies, procedures, and best practices will also be discussed in the context of the hospital.

Drawing on the experiences of a variety of thriving palliative care programs, the *Guide* describes seven stages to launching and running a quality program:

1. Building the Case for a Hospital-Based Palliative Care Program
2. Designing an Operational Plan
3. Presenting the Business Plan
4. Implementing Palliative Care Services
5. Measuring Program Quality and Impact
6. Marketing the Palliative Care Program
7. Sustaining and Growing the Program

The Appendices contain examples of tools and guidelines, as well as sample policies and procedures. As developed, identified, and made available on the CAPC website over time, the *Guide* will be supplemented by additional tools and resources.

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