

# Messaging Palliative Care

Palliative Care is an often-misunderstood term. It is critical that everyone working in palliative care is fully aware of what it is, how to define it, and how to discuss it correctly. This document provides a quick and easy way of staying on track and on topic, and will help everyone convey the same message.

## Definition of Palliative Care

### Key Research Findings

“It matters how you define palliative care. It is about improving quality of life, providing an extra layer of support, and having a team focus to patient care. It is about how palliative care helps both the family and the patient with serious illness. It is NOT about hospice or end of life care.”

### Full Evidence-Based Definition

Palliative care (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. It focuses on providing patients with relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.

Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, and other specialists who work together with a patient’s other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the prognosis. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

### Short “Elevator” Definition

Palliative care is specialized medical care that treats the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. The goal is to improve quality of life.

## Key Messages

Palliative Care is an often-misunderstood term. It is critical that everyone working in palliative care is fully aware of what it is, how to define it, and how to discuss it correctly. Use this content as material for emails, letters, speeches, presentations, etc.

The following two messages specifically address the topic/question: "Why the need for palliative care?"

- Today's health care system is mismatched to the needs of seriously ill patients, because it is not designed to meet their needs.
- Palliative care is the new paradigm that provides a solution to this deep-rooted problem by focusing on interdisciplinary, team-driven care directed at patient-centered outcomes such as quality of life, symptom burden, emotional well-being, communication, continuity of care, and caregiver burden.

The following messages specifically address the topic/question: "What is palliative care?"

- Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing patients with relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness.
- The goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.
- Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, and other specialists who work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support.
- Palliative care is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.
- Palliative care is based on need, not prognosis.