

PALLIATIVE CARE, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The Origin of Palliative Care

From the very first days of medicine, caregivers have understood the primacy of reducing their patients' suffering; the first aim has always been to make people feel better. Palliate comes from pallium, the Latin word for 'cloak'. To palliate is to cloak, or cover up, the symptoms of an illness without curing it. This meaning grew into the idea of alleviating or reducing suffering.

Palliative care got its start as hospice care, often delivered by caregivers at religious institutions. Dame Cicely Saunders, a British physician, founded the first formal hospice in 1948 specifically to care for patients with terminal illnesses. Her success in improving her patients' quality of life led her to introduce the concept of hospice care to other physicians, who quickly recognized the value in respecting people's wishes and needs at the end of life. Caregivers began to understand that these values could apply to patients without terminal illnesses as well.



UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute

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A New Way of Caregiving

In 1990, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized palliative care as a distinct specialty dedicated to relieving suffering and improving quality of life for patients with life-limiting illnesses or serious injuries. WHO described the goals of palliative care as the prevention, assessment, and multidisciplinary treatment of physical, spiritual, and psychological problems. Palliative care was now an established entity, separate from hospice and sometimes administered along with curative treatments, but hospitals were rather slow to adopt the practice.

The Growth of Palliative Care

Palliative care eventually began to catch hold in hospitals across the United States. Between 2000 and 2011, the prevalence of palliative care in U.S. hospitals with 50 or more beds has increased more than 157% (according to the Center to Advance Palliative Care). Today, palliative care programs ensure whole-person healthcare for patients in approximately 75% of all hospitals with more than 300 beds. As more people begin to understand and appreciate the benefits that palliative care offers, the specialty has become available in nursing homes, ambulatory care centers, and home care programs.

Palliative Care at UPMC

The UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute is a network of professionals who are committed to helping patients with serious or life-limiting illnesses by assisting them in achieving their treatment goals. We also provide services and treatments to people who are recovering from injuries or surgery. Our professionals include physicians, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists, social workers, dietitians, chaplains, and others who are experienced in providing a full range of care for the body, mind, and spirit.

We seek to manage the suffering that comes from uncertainty and pain when an illness is affecting the quality of a patient's life, and we strive to enhance the quality of life for all patients and families living with the burden of serious illness. Dedication to attentive symptom management and a real commitment to the patient's and family's values help us make their lives easier.

You can access our services through nearly every UPMC location or provider. We also provide services in patients' homes, in nursing facilities, and in hospices.

Contact Us

If you or somebody you know could benefit from the work of the UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute, send us an email at PSICare@UPMC.edu, call our toll-free line at **1-855-565-7146**, or visit our website at UPMC.com/PSI.