

This Month, Remember Hospice and Palliative Care

November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month. The theme this year is "Hope, Dignity, Love ... It must be hospice." When I reflect on the care from the nurses, chaplains, social workers, personal-care givers and volunteers, I think hope, dignity and love are exactly what they provide.

One of the strengths of hospice is treating death as a process, not a moment. This allows for preparation physically by treating pain, psychologically by attending to self and needs of family, as well as spiritually. Hospice and palliative care allow people to live as fully as possible until the time of death.

Hospice has transformed the dying experience in America. Hope can be maintained. When one is told, "There is nothing more we can do," hospice can maintain hope by reframing goals from a cure to maintaining comfort and dignity. Hospice has allowed the dying to move away from the hospital to a home-like experience. According to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, 70 percent of hospice patients die in their place of residence (home, assisted living or residential facility.) Finally, the hospice team has great expertise in relieving suffering, and even the most challenging pain can be managed or at least reduced.

So, as Thanksgiving approaches, I am thankful for the skill and compassion of all hospice workers here in Mid-Missouri and the palliative care teams in our hospitals. They work hard in an area of medicine that is often underappreciated. Happy National Hospice and Palliative Care Month.

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