



# Physician Matters

A publication for physicians and other healthcare providers

Summer 2017

## Comfort Care in Hospice...

### Is more than treating symptoms and more than using narcotics and benzos...

- It is about alleviating suffering and treating symptoms tailored as much as possible to the cause of the symptoms (including those rooted in spiritual, emotional, physical needs).
- It can be as simple as a chocolate shake or donated monies for gas for one last trip to the beach...
- It can be as finely tuned as adjusting cardiac medications to enable another week of getting to the breakfast table or a night of less disturbed sleep without shortness of breath; or sometimes decreasing hypertensive meds to minimize dizziness and risk of falls.

### Comfort care is about regular, careful review of all medications, treatments and interventions to:

- Maximally treat symptoms specific to etiology BEFORE using narcotics, benzos or anti-psychotics.
- Carefully taper, lower dosages, or stop medications whose risks outweigh benefits.

- Allow medication holidays when possible.
- Decrease pill burden.
- Adjust meds for maximum alertness to enable participation in life to the maximum degree desired and possible.

### At the end of life, a person's symptoms and suffering clearly manifest in physical, emotional, and spiritual ways. Tailoring comfort care for the individual requires:

- Finding out what matters most to the terminally ill person and their family.
- Adjusting care to maximize enjoyment, pleasure, and participation in life yet to be lived.
- Providing space and place for healing relationships, fulfilling bucket lists, and enabling times of laughter in the midst of the reality of frail life and suffering.

We, the hospice team, are committed to total comfort care for your patients to the extent we are able. We love to creatively manage symptoms to maximize life to the very end.



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

We offer comfort care — nights and weekends, holidays and during regular business hours. As hospice physicians, we work with you to order Schedule II medications, fine-tune organ-system medications, and pick up on symptoms of all etiologies that need early treatment. We always tailor treatments and therapies to the patient and family and physician preferences as much as possible. This takes time and sometimes effort, and we do it, ***because it matters.***

*Thank you for the privilege of working with you to provide comfort care to your patients.*

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