

Hospice Care for Alzheimer's/Dementia Patients

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SPONSORED Oct. 7, 2019

Dementia is a condition seen most commonly in older patients where the patient's intellectual and thinking capacities are irretrievably lost. Except for rare exceptions, the condition is incurable. Advanced dementia/Alzheimer's disease is a life-limiting condition which is becoming a prominent diagnosis in hospice. To enhance the services we provide to dementia patients/families, Joliet Area Community Hospice now has a Certified Dementia Practitioner and our multi-disciplinary clinical teams are receiving additional dementia training to assist patients/families with this diagnosis.

Often family members become angry and confused when a family member with dementia dies from pneumonia, or another "treatable" illness. The fact is that all dementia patients die from complications of the disease, such as infections or breathing problems, or other conditions such as heart failure. Sometimes, if the patient is treated with aggressive measures, the infection, for example, can be overcome. But frequently the course of treatment itself is very hard and leaves dementia patients in a more depleted condition. At some point, family members realize "enough is enough" and ask the doctor to provide only comfort medications or treatments and hospice care.

This disease is hard on family and loved ones, maybe harder even than on the patient. It's very difficult to watch as a parent or grandparent become more forgetful, more confused, and slowly become less the person they once were, the person we remember. This is hard for family members to watch, and everyone deals with it in their own way, some better than others.

Families need to come together when someone is diagnosed with dementia. Talking to doctors about the disease can be helpful, and oftentimes counseling is indispensable in coming to terms with uncomfortable emotions and behaviors brought out during such a stressful period. To learn more, please call Joliet Area Community Hospice – this community's choice for quality hospice care and a United Way agency.

Please contact us should you have any questions.

Joliet Area Community Hospice

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