

Circle Of Life: Cancer Education and Wellness
for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities



American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM
Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Wellness along the Cancer Journey:
Palliative Care
Revised October 2015



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WELLNESS ALONG THE CANCER JOURNEY: PALLIATIVE CARE

Goals: Community health workers and care providers will be able to define and discuss palliative care and related issues. They will also understand some common emotional and physical issues addressed by palliative care throughout the cancer journey.

Learning Objectives:

- What is palliative care?
- When is palliative care used?
- How cancer pain can be managed?
- What is the difference between home and hospice care?



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Module Overview	358
.....	360
.....	361
Palliative Care.....	362
Group Discussion	362
What does palliative care do?	363
Choosing Palliative Care.....	365
Can a family member receive palliative care?	366
Activity	367
.....	367
Story of Hope.....	368
Key Messages	368
Addressing Cancer Pain as Part of Palliative Care	369
Group Discussion	370
Facts about Cancer Pain Treatment.....	371
Key Messages	374
Home Care	375
Group Discussion	376
Choosing Home Care.....	376
Types of Home Care Services	378
Activity	382
Story of Hope.....	383
Key Messages	383
Behavioral Change Questions	385
Knowledge Questions	387
Appendices	388
Appendix A: Additional Palliative Care Resources	390



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Chapter 1: Module Overview



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Module Overview

This module will look at the type of care given to cancer patients and their families, including pain and other symptoms. Palliative therapy is treatment aimed at relieving symptoms. It is not meant as a cure for the disease (cancer). Most often, palliative care is given along with other treatments that are intended to cure or treat the cancer. Palliative care is also given when a cure is not possible, and even when other treatments have stopped. The main purpose of this type of treatment is to improve the patient's comfort and quality of life at all stages of the cancer journey.

In this module, we will be discussing palliative care as it relates to the cancer journey (diagnosis, treatment, and beyond). Home care will be discussed in this module. Home care for the sick is the oldest form of health care. Today, a wide range of health and social services can be given in the home. Whether a person is being treated for cancer, is recovering from it, or has advanced disease, home care can be an option. Through home care a person can get expert, compassionate health care in the home instead of in a hospital or other facility.

The module on nearing the end of life will discuss hospice, which includes palliative care given near the end of life. This is used when other treatments have stopped working.

Definitions of Palliative Care

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. This type of care is focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness -- whatever the diagnosis. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a team of healthcare providers, nurses, and other specialists who work with a patient's other healthcare providers to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and can be provided together with curative treatment.

American Cancer Society, 2011

Palliative care is comfort care given to a patient who has a serious or life-threatening disease, such as cancer, from the time of diagnosis and throughout the course of illness. It is often provided by specialists who work with a team of other health care professionals, such as doctors, nurses, registered dietitians, pharmacists, and social workers.

(The National Cancer Institute. (2010). Palliative Care in Cancer. Accessed April 24, 2015 from <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Support/palliative-care>)

“Palliative Care addresses care needs of people with serious life-limiting illnesses such as cancer. It focuses on bringing comfort and reducing pain to the patient even when cure may not possible.”

-(Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. (2009). Cancer Glossary. Retrieved October 8, 2015, from <http://www.anthc.org/chs/crs/cancer/cancerglossary>)