

Mayo Clinic Q & A - Palliative Care “ Dr. Deirdre Pachman

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Deirdre Pachman, DeeDee Stiepan, Narrator

N Narrator 00:01
Coming up on Mayo Clinic Q&A,

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 00:03
Palliative care is an approach to care that really focuses on improving quality of life by managing symptoms that may come up from cancer or its treatment. And palliative care is really appropriate at any stage of cancer, whether it be diagnosis through treatment and beyond.

N Narrator 00:20
Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing patients relief from pain and other symptoms of a serious medical condition.

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 00:28
The goal of palliative care along with helping patients manage their symptoms and improving quality of life is really providing that support to their loved ones or their caregivers, so that they have time to care for themselves, feel well supported so that they can continue to give to others.

D DeeDee Stiepan 00:44
Welcome everyone to Mayo Clinic Q&A. I'm DeeDee Stiepan sitting in for Dr. Halena Gazelka.

Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing patients relief from pain and other symptoms of serious illness, no matter the diagnosis or stage of the disease. When offered alongside cancer treatment palliative care can help people with cancer manage symptoms and improve the quality of life for both patients and their families. Joining us to explain how palliative care is used for cancer patients is Mayo Clinic palliative medicine expert, Dr. Deirdre Pachman. Welcome to the program Dr. Pachman. Thanks so much for joining us.

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 01:21

Yes, thank you. Thank you for having me.

D DeeDee Stiepan 01:24

Well, first off there can be a lot of confusion for people about palliative care versus hospice care. So, how do they differ?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 01:32

Yeah, absolutely. This is a really common question that we get from patients. So, palliative care is an approach to care that really focuses on improving quality of life by managing symptoms that may come up from cancer or its treatment. And palliative care is really appropriate at any stage of cancer whether it be diagnosis through treatment and beyond. Hospice is a more specific type of palliative care. It also focuses on quality of life and improving symptoms, but hospice care tends to get more involved when someone may no longer be getting treatment directed at the cancer, or if there's a more limited life expectancy.

D DeeDee Stiepan 02:14

So, could you talk a little bit more about what role palliative care plays in the treatment of people with cancer? What types of support and services might be offered?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 02:23

Yeah, well when somebody has cancer, they can have multiple symptoms associated with the cancer or its treatment. They might be physical symptoms like pain or nausea, fatigue, or other emotional or social or spiritual needs. And the palliative care team really focuses on addressing these symptoms and these needs so that we can help people feel as comfortable as they can as they go through their treatment for cancer. You know, we do this by focusing and talking about some different interventions, they might be medications, or they might be other procedures for pain that some of our colleagues do. Palliative care is a very team-based approach too, so we may involve our nurses, or social workers, or chaplains, really to all be there to help support the patient and make sure that we're addressing their symptoms and their needs. And, you know, some of these services might be through the palliative care team, and others may be through our other colleagues such as pain specialists, or physical therapy or things like that.

D DeeDee Stiepan 03:32
So, how do physicians decide if a person with cancer needs or should get palliative care?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 03:37
Yeah, well ideally palliative care can be involved as early as needed in the cancer treatment process and really be involved throughout other stages of cancer. Some oncologists may recommend a palliative care referral at diagnosis, and others maybe when somebody has more symptoms, or difficult to treat symptoms. So, really palliative care can be another layer of support at any stage for a patient who has cancer. We tend though, to see patients who may have more advanced cancer or patients who have symptoms related to the cancer or its treatment that need some help with that.

D DeeDee Stiepan 04:20
Okay, that makes sense. And is this something all cancer care providers offer or just some?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 04:27
Yeah, so all cancer care providers help can manage symptoms associated with cancer and its treatment and care about the comfort of their patients, but palliative care specialists have a little more training in symptom management and in helping patients, families, and caregivers cope with serious illness.

D DeeDee Stiepan 04:49
So, what can people with cancer expect from palliative care?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 04:54
Well, you know, when a patient is seen in palliative care, they can expect a comprehensive assessment of their symptoms and their needs, and they can expect that we'll work together as we think of a treatment plan that can best address these symptoms and needs. Again, they can expect that there may be a team involved in that nurses, social workers, chaplains, really all to make sure that we're working together. And they can expect that the palliative care provider is working closely with their oncologist so that we're all on the same page and working together to make sure that we're addressing those symptoms and providing that extra support.

D DeeDee Stiepan 05:34
That's got to be comforting to have sort of that team approach around you. What are the types

of questions people should be asking their care teams about palliative care?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 05:44

I think asking their care teams if there are palliative care services available to them, and if there are, then they can directly, you know, ask for a referral to involve palliative care in their team.

D DeeDee Stiepan 05:58

We talked a little bit earlier about not just the patient but the families and the caregivers of the patients. So, what can the caregivers of people with cancer, what should they know? What can they expect? How can it help families?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 06:12

Yeah, well, I think one is just recognizing how cancer doesn't just affect the person who has it, but all the people around them, and palliative care teams do have training in helping support families and caregivers and make sure that they get to the resources that will be most helpful for them. You know, the goal of palliative care along with helping patients manage their symptoms and improving quality of life, is really providing that support to their loved ones, or their caregivers so that they have time to care for themselves, feel well supported so that they can continue to give to others.

D DeeDee Stiepan 06:48

Wonderful. Is there anything else that you'd like to add? Anything else you think people should know?

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 06:54

I think just to reiterate that, you know, palliative care is another layer of support for patients as they go through their process with cancer, and that involving palliative care doesn't mean stopping treatment or changing that cancer treatment, but just having that extra support, and that palliative care really can be considered part of the cancer care team.

D DeeDee Stiepan 07:16

Perfect. Well, our thanks to Mayo Clinic palliative medicine expert, Dr. Deirdre Pachman, for being here today to discuss how palliative care resources can help patients with cancer. Thank you so much for your time. This is a great discussion.

D Dr. Deirdre Pachman 07:28



Dr. Debra Pachman 07:20

Thank you.



Narrator 07:30

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