

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE STATEMENT REGARDING RECENT HOSPICE MEDIA COVERAGE

As the leaders of the major national organizations representing hospice and palliative care providers, we have been concerned by some of the recent inaccurate and negative portrayals of hospice care in America in several major news outlets. All of us represent a dedicated workforce of specially trained professionals that serve on the interdisciplinary hospice team including nurses, physicians, social workers, chaplains, hospice administrators and other personnel and trained volunteers. We join together as the [National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care](http://www.nationalcoalitionhpc.org) to question the journalistic integrity of these media reports which blatantly ignore the facts and research regarding the many benefits of hospice care while sensationalizing the dramatic examples of poor care received by a very small minority of patients and families. Hospice care in America has been studied for decades and includes a vast amount of data collected over the years.

High quality hospice care provided each and every day is substantiated by data and research that demonstrates the following:

- Multiple, well designed, rigorous peer reviewed studies demonstrate that quality of care in hospice far exceeds that in traditional care.
 - 9 out of 10 adults would prefer to be cared for at home rather than in a hospital or nursing home if diagnosed with a terminal illness. 96% of hospice care is provided in the patient's home or place they call home.
 - Hospice care is associated with better outcomes for surviving family members.
 - People live longer under hospice at lower cost than traditional health care with savings of about \$2,800 per Medicare beneficiary. (Duke University, *Social Science and Medicine*, Taylor, 10/07)
 - The Family Evaluation of Hospice Care, a national post-death survey completed by nearly 230,000 family caregivers, reports 93.5% of families rated the care provided by hospice as "excellent" or "very good" and 97.3% indicated that they would recommend their hospice to others.
 - Better treatment of pain has resulted in 95.1% of respondents indicating that their family member received "the right amount" of medication for pain.
 - Quality end-of-life care can reduce unnecessary hospital costs by reducing readmissions, emergency department visits and intensive care stays.
 - Hospice providers have called on Congress to pass legislation and for CMS to implement consistent and timely regulatory oversight which would require more frequent inspections.
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We acknowledge that there may be a few outliers who did not uphold high quality care and we do not defend their practices. However, we do demand the accurate portrayal of hospice care and services that are provided based on years of research and data collected from thousands of real patients and families. The fact remains that hospice is a preferred choice by many patients and families due to its high quality and patient and family satisfaction.

The facts should speak for themselves but in many cases, they don't. That is where you, as individual providers of hospice and palliative care, come in – the physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, hospice medical directors, administrators and staff. All of you can take on a leadership role in your community and encourage positive media coverage of the true story of *living* while receiving hospice care. These stories and positive outcomes need to be shared by you with your local media and that includes writing Letters to the Editor, submitting online comments when you see both accurate and inaccurate news coverage of hospice and utilizing social media yourself in its many forms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). You name it, it can be done, and it can make a difference.

Many of you have real stories of patients and families who have greatly benefited from hospice care – many family members who say that the days, weeks or months that they received hospice care were some of the *best days of their lives*. Your patients and families should be encouraged to talk, post and utilize social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to share their experience – many would be happy to but it has never been suggested.

Every day, hospice helps people have the end-of-life experience so many say they want: outside of a hospital, free from pain and other symptoms, and surrounded by the people they love. That deserves the media's attention, too - ask for it, demand it – be a part of the solution.

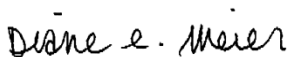
Sincerely,



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National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care
<http://www.nationalcoalitionhpc.org/>