

ASCO: Early palliative care beneficial for caregivers

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(HealthDay)—Palliative care that's offered soon after a terminal cancer

diagnosis can also help caregivers, according to a study released Wednesday during a media briefing that previewed some of the research to be presented at the upcoming annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, held from June 3 to 7 in Chicago.

The study included 275 [family caregivers](#). Their loved ones had recently been diagnosed with incurable lung and gastrointestinal cancers. The patients let the researchers know who their primary caregiver was. The researchers met with the caregivers at the start of the study. They saw the caregivers again at 12 and 24 weeks.

Introducing palliative care shortly after cancer diagnosis led to better quality of life for caregivers. It also led to fewer symptoms of depression among the caregivers. This study is the first to show that offering palliative care early may offer significant benefits for people caring for dying cancer patients, the researchers said.

"This study suggests that early [palliative care](#) creates a powerful positive feedback loop in families facing cancer," study author Areej El-Jawahri, M.D., an oncologist with the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center in Boston, said in news release from the American Society of Clinical Oncology. She noted that patients get a direct benefit from such care, and it seems that "their [caregivers](#) experience a positive downstream effect, which may make it easier for them to care for their loved ones."

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