

When should patients with dementia receive palliative care?

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Patients with dementia may benefit from being referred to specialist palliative care—a branch of medicine that focuses on optimizing quality of life and providing relief from symptoms—but who should be referred, and when? A recent analysis of published studies on the topic found a lack of consensus regarding referral criteria for palliative care in

patients with dementia. The results are published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

The analysis identified a wide array of reasons for referring patients with [dementia](#) to specialist palliative care, broadly classified under 13 themes. The diversity highlights the many reasons to involve specialist palliative care and simultaneously the lack of consensus on when patients should be referred.

"Given the growing recognition of unmet supportive and palliative care needs in [patients](#) with dementia, a set of consensual referral criteria may facilitate timely specialist [palliative care](#) referral to enhance patient and caregiver outcomes," said senior author David Hui, MD, MSc, of the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

More information: Li Mo et al, Referral criteria to specialist palliative care for patients with dementia: A systematic review, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.17070](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.17070)

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