

Early attention to quality of life reduces hospital costs for advanced cancer patients

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Earlier introduction of palliative care for patients hospitalized with advanced cancer is associated with lower hospital costs, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. The findings support a growing body of evidence that suggests that early provision of palliative care not only enhances the quality of medical care received by patients and families with serious illness, but does so at a lower cost than traditional oncologic care.

The observational study, funded by the National Cancer Institute and National Institute for Nursing Research, compared the clinical and cost data from 969 adult patients with an [advanced cancer](#) diagnosis in five US hospitals from 2007 to 2011, with 256 patients receiving [palliative care](#) and traditional oncologic care and 713 receiving traditional oncologic care alone. Comparison of the two groups showed:

- Palliative care consultation within six days of hospitalization reduced hospital costs by \$1,312 as compared to patients receiving traditional care
- Palliative care consultation within two days of hospitalization reduced hospital costs by an additional \$968 more as compared to patients receiving traditional care for a total of \$2,208.
- Respectively, these reductions were equivalent to a 14% and a 24% reduction in the cost of hospital stay.

"As our population ages and patterns of disease continue to shift, there is an urgent need for affordable models of care for [patients](#) living with

serious illness that improve quality and access," explained R. Sean Morrison, MD, senior author of the study and director of the National Palliative Care Research Center. The results of this study suggest that palliative care has its greatest effect when provided early in the course of hospitalization.

Palliative care provides specialized medical attention for people with serious illnesses, with a focus on 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, and is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and can be provided along with curative treatment. Care is delivered by a team of doctors, nurses and other specialists who work together with a patient's primary physicians to provide an extra layer of support.

Provided by Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC)

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