

## Introducing specialist palliative care services

Recommendation	Useful phrases (where applicable)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider referral to specialist palliative care services, where available and depending on the patient's or caregiver's needs, at any time once the treatment goal changes from curative to palliative (ie, the patient may still be receiving palliative treatments, such as chemotherapy, aimed at controlling the underlying disease).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to the palliative care health care professionals as part of the multidisciplinary team.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"I work closely with the palliative care team in looking after patients such as yourself who have advanced cancer [or lung disease, etc, as appropriate to the underlying illness]."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise the topic by being honest and open and use the term "palliative care" explicitly.</li> </ul>	<p>For health care professional referring to palliative care team:  <i>"The palliative care team can provide extra support to you and your family and help optimise your comfort and level of function."</i>  <i>"Extra help and support from the palliative care service might be useful now, especially if we are to give you the best and most appropriate care possible."</i>  <i>"The palliative care team can work closely with you and me in optimizing your comfort and level of function."</i></p> <p>For palliative care health care professional at time of initial consultation: <i>"I work closely with the other doctors and nurses caring for you. The aim of palliative care is to ensure that, at all stages of your illness, you are kept as comfortable as possible, regardless of what is happening to your [cancer, heart, lungs]."</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify and correct misconceptions about palliative care services (particularly that it is not solely for people who are dying or associated with imminent death).</li> </ul>	<p><i>"What does the term 'palliative care' mean to you?"</i>  <i>"Many people have either not heard of 'palliative care', or associate it with dying in the very near future."</i></p> <p>Then respond to the patient's cues:  <i>"It might be useful for you if I explain what palliative care is really all about."</i>  <i>"Have you had any experiences with others receiving palliative care?"</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the role of the palliative care team, emphasising expertise in symptom management as well as the wide range of support services and assistance with quality of life, and support for family, partner, children, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><i>"The palliative care team have a lot to offer as support. This includes pain control and the control of other symptoms resulting from the cancer."</i>  <i>"Palliative care includes a whole range of health care professionals who can help support you and your family at this time."</i>  <i>"The palliative care team works closely with me to help you live life to the full."</i></p>



Recommendation	Useful phrases (where applicable)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain that the patient can be linked up with the palliative care team at the same time as receiving treatments directed at the underlying disease (eg, chemotherapy).</li> </ul>	<p><i>“[Our team/I] often work very closely and together with the palliative care [team/services] while giving people treatment [x].”</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain that the patient will still be followed up by the primary health care team (eg, GP, generalist nurse) or the primary specialist (eg, oncologist, respiratory physician), where applicable.</li> </ul>	<p>For GP or primary specialist: <i>“I will still be your main doctor, but the palliative care team will be able to provide extra support or advice with the best medicines for your pain.”</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss with the patient and caregivers what that means in terms of who they should contact for what kinds of issues or situations.</li> </ul>	<p>For palliative care health care professional: <i>“I will work closely with [name of doctor]. Doctor. . . will still be your main doctor, but we will work together to ensure that you are as comfortable as possible.”</i></p>

*Clayton JM, Hancock KM, Butow PN, et al. Clinical practice guidelines for communicating prognosis and end-of-life issues with adults in the advanced stages of a life-limiting illness, and their caregivers. Med J Aust 2007; 286(12): S79-S108. © Copyright 2007 The Medical Journal of Australia – reproduced with permission.*

