



Why didn't anyone tell me about Palliative Care?

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Palliative care

Overall Goal of Palliative Care:

To improve the quality of life for cancer survivors by preventing and relieving physical, psychological, social, and spiritual suffering throughout survivorship.



By the end of this session, learners will be able to:

- Define what palliative care is and what role it has in cancer survivorship
- Identify common challenges in cancer survivorship
- Explain benefits of early palliative care integration
- Describe interdisciplinary strategies to improve quality of life
- Obtain a better understanding of what advance care planning is and why it is important.



Why This Topic Matters

As of January 2022, there were 18.1 million cancer survivors in the United States, which is 5.4% of the population.

Many live with chronic symptoms long after treatment

Palliative care improves well-being across survivorship

Survivorship ≠ end of care





What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care has an established philosophy that aims to help people focus on living with rather than dying from progressive advanced illness.

We are there to help people to live as fully as they can within the confines of their illness, until natural death occurs.

Assists with:

Goals of care
Medical decision-making

Symptom Management
Advance care planning



Barriers to Palliative care use

- Not knowing what palliative care is
- Provider referral needed to access palliative care.
- Stigma attached to palliative care -
....often thought to be the same as hospice.
- Limited access to specialty palliative care services
- Individual preferences
 - A) Sole trust in their primary provider
 - B) Not being engaged in decision making
 - C) Fear of talking about the future
 - D) Reluctance to complete advance care planning
 - E) Eternal optimism



Palliative care and Hospice care...

PALLIATIVE CARE

- Paid by insurance or out-of-pocket
- Can receive at any stage of disease
- Can occur at same time as curative treatment
- Typically occurs in hospital or in community

THINGS IN COMMON

- Optimize comfort
- Reduce stress
- Relieve symptoms
- Provide emotional & spiritual support

HOSPICE CARE

- Paid by Medicare, Medicaid, Insurance
- Prognosis of 6 months or less
- Cannot be utilizing curative treatment
- Typically occurs wherever you live



Core Principles of Palliative care

- Holistic approach
- Patient & family centered
- Interdisciplinary teamwork
- Communication & goal-setting
- Symptom management.





Myths vs Realities

Myth: Palliative care = end of life

Reality: Provided *anytime*,
including with treatment
and survivorship

Myth: Means giving up

Reality: Enhances tolerance *and* outcomes

Palliative Care

- any stage of an illness
- can also receive life-prolonging care
- wider range of what palliative care looks like



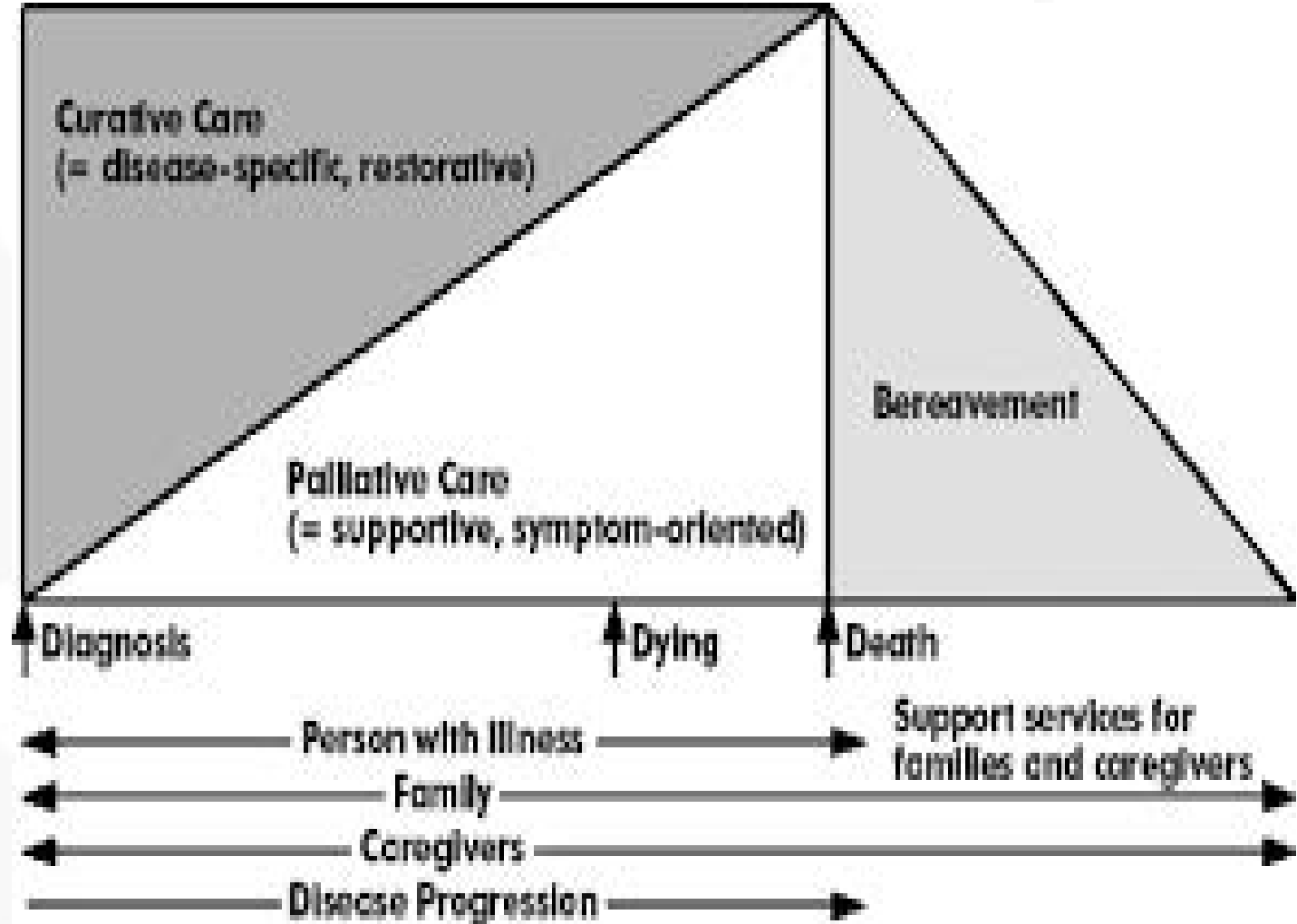
What is Cancer Survivorship?

Survivorship begins at:

Diagnosis

Continues through treatment

Extends into long-term survivorship





Phases of Survivorship

In cancer, survivorship focuses on the health and well-being of a person with cancer from the time of diagnosis until the end of life. This includes the physical, mental, emotional, social, and financial effects of cancer that begin at diagnosis and continue through treatment and beyond.

Cancer survivorship has three phases:

Acute survivorship: This phase of survivorship starts at the diagnosis and finishes when treatment is completed. Treating the cancer is the focus during this phase.

Extended survivorship: This phase begins after the patient finishes treatment and continues for the months to follow. The focus during this phase is on the side-effects of cancer and treatment.

Permanent survivorship: The last phase of survivorship focuses on the long-term side-effects of cancer and treatment. This phase begins years after the final treatment when the cancer is less likely to return.



Interdisciplinary & Practical Approaches

Key Members of the Team

Oncology Team

Palliative care

Nursing

Primary care provider

Specialist providers

Pain management

Physical wellness

Social work

Dieticians

Mental health

Rehabilitation

Spiritual care

Survivorship support





Why Palliative Care Matters in Survivorship





Persistent Symptom Burden

Survivors often experience long-lasting:

- Pain
- Sleep disturbances
- Sexual dysfunction
- GI symptoms
- Emotional distress

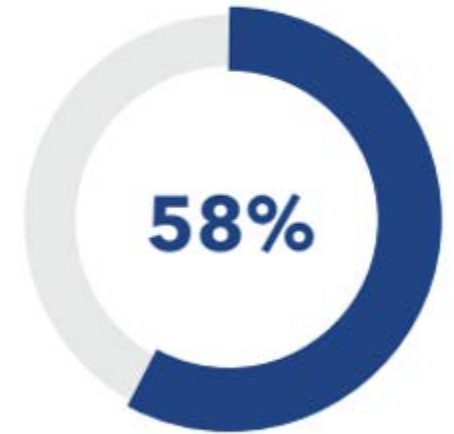
A Majority of Survivors Still Experiencing Symptoms Today



Diagnosed
3-5 years ago



Diagnosed
6-10 years ago



Diagnosed
10+ years ago



Common Physical Challenges

Chronic pain

Fatigue

Neuropathy

Insomnia

Anxiety and depression

Cognitive changes ("chemo brain")





Psychological & Social Challenges

Fear of recurrence

Anxiety and depression

Body image concerns

Social Isolation

Financial toxicity

Home needs





Health Promotion Strategies

Nutrition
Exercise
Sleep hygiene
Stress management
Support resources
Wellness promotion
Smoking/alcohol cessation

Rebuilding health and
Resilience.....





Caregiver Support

Education
Self-Care
Physical well being
Mental well being
Emotional support resources
Burden assessment
Community connections

Caregiver Self-care

HIRE
MORE
HELP

EAT
HEALTHY
FOODS

GET
ENOUGH
SLEEP

GO FOR A
DAILY
WALK

Self
care

KEEP
PREVENTIVE
MEDICAL
APPOINTMENTS

CONNECT
WITH
FRIENDS

FIND A
SUPPORT
GROUP

WORK ON
A HOBBY



Palliative Care Early Integration Benefits

Improved symptom control

Less acute care use

Better communication

Higher patient satisfaction

Higher caregiver satisfaction



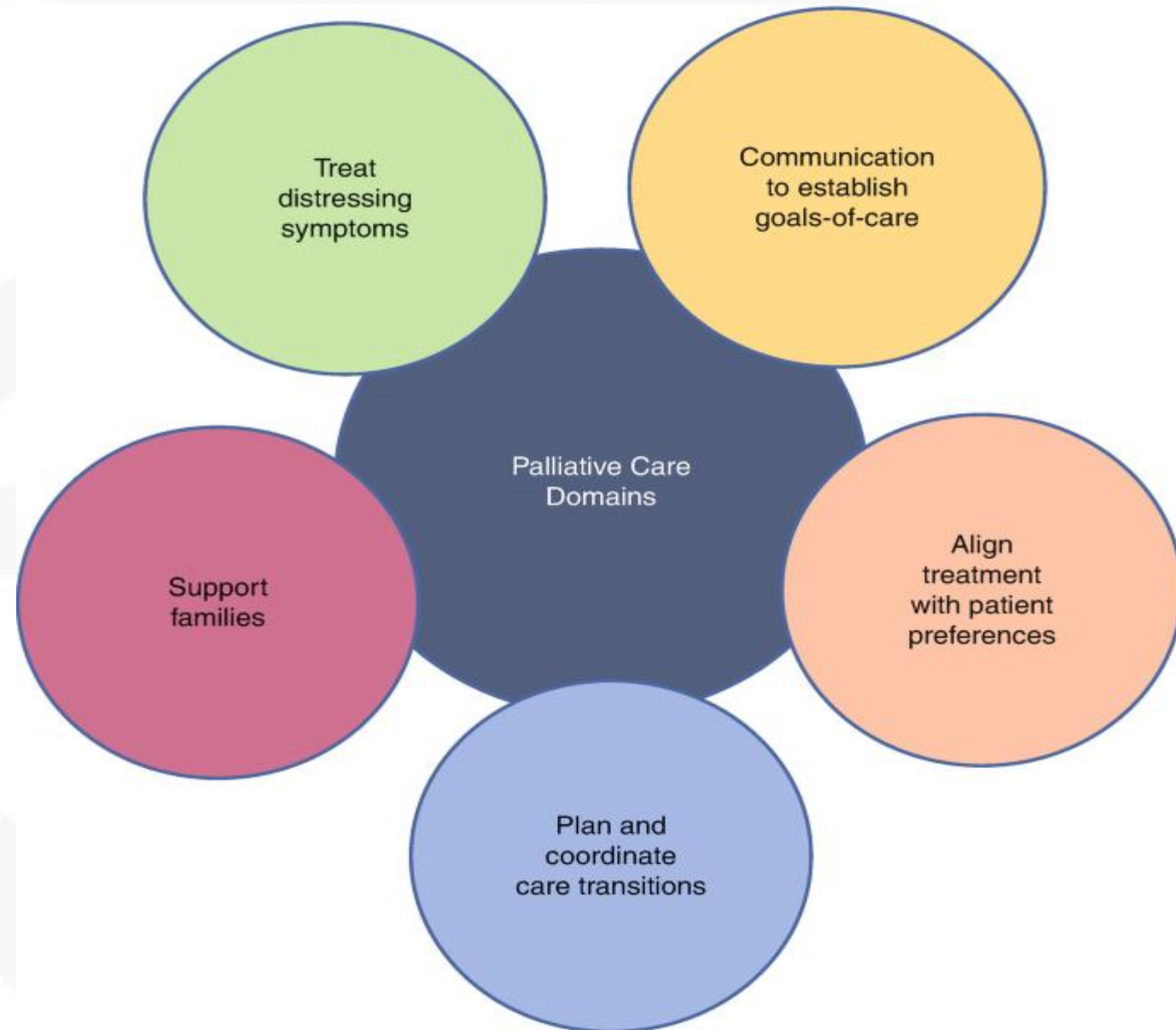


Shared Goals of Survivorship & Palliative Care

Clarifying goals during
Transitions in care...

Coordination between
Oncology, primary care,
and other specialties.

Informed decision making
is an essential component
to living well after a
cancer diagnosis.





Advance care planning

Discussions about goals of care, what is important to you, values, and preferences

Informed decision-making -
documentation

- Living Will
- Power of Attorney
- Code status
- POLST form

IT ALWAYS
SEEMS
TOO EARLY,
UNTIL IT'S
TOO LATE.

**START the
CONVERSATION**

Make it known how you want to LIVE.



Case Scenerio:

55-year-old female breast cancer survivor

No evidence of disease

Persistent:

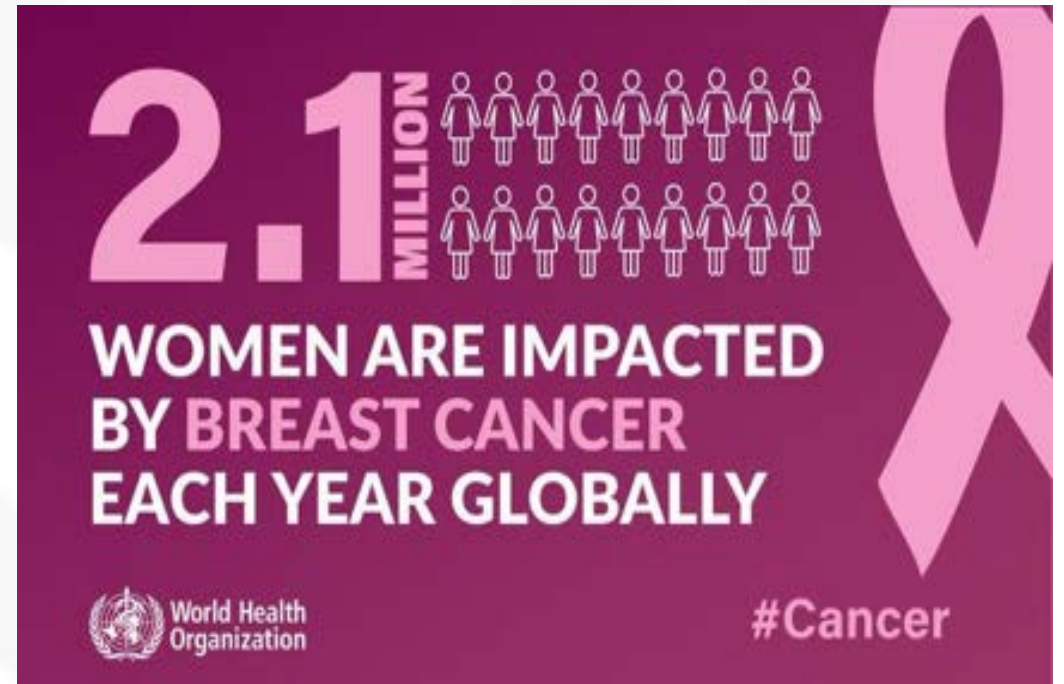
Neuropathy

Pain

Fatigue

Work-related stress

Anxiety about recurrence





Case Discussion

Questions:

- What symptoms need immediate attention?
- Which team members should be involved?
- How could palliative care help her with quality of life?
- What goals-of-care topics are relevant?
- Is Advance care planning discussion appropriate?



Key Takeaways:

Palliative care is **not** limited to end-of-life
Survivors carry significant long-term symptom burdens
Early palliative integration improves outcomes
Quality of life is the primary goal
Survivorship demands **interdisciplinary care**

IMPACT OF PALLIATIVE CARE



Symptom Relief

75%

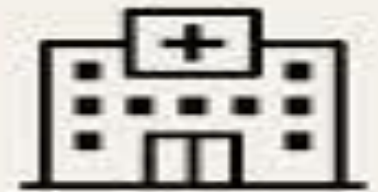
of patients report
reduced pain



Quality of Life
Improvement

68%

experience better
daily comfort



Hospital
Readmission

30%

fewer readmissions



Conclusion



Palliative care enhances cancer survivorship by addressing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs—supporting survivors and families long after treatment ends.

Palliative care is simply a good medical practice to ensure patient's comfort and quality of life, in keeping in view how patients would like to proceed with their medical care.



Thank you for your time

Open to questions, comments.

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