

Enhancing wellbeing in your journey with a life-threatening illness



APCC

ASSOCIATION OF PALLIATIVE
CARE CENTRES®

This leaflet aims to clarify what palliative care is and *means*. There is often fear around what contacting (or being referred to) an APCC member represents.

One of the **most** important points is that engaging palliative care does not mean that nothing more can be done or that you have given up. The services that are provided by APCC members, many of whom are known as hospices, are designed to support patients and their families through some of the most stressful periods in life and to provide quality of life for as long as possible.

Here are answers to some of the specific questions that we frequently receive:

Q: What exactly is palliative care?

A: Palliative care is holistic and includes the physical, psychological, social and spiritual care provided by an inter-disciplinary team of specialists to both adults and children with a life-threatening illness and their loved ones. Care is offered from the time of diagnosis and extends to bereavement support if needed. Over 90% of the care that APCC members provide is home-based with a focus on promoting quality of life through managing pain and other distressing symptoms.¹ Palliative care can and should be provided alongside curative treatments for life-threatening illnesses, ideally from diagnosis.

Q: Who offers palliative care services?

A: Hospices are recognized as 'specialists' in Palliative Care². APCC members are required to comply with the Standards for Palliative Healthcare Services, approved by the Council for Health Service Accreditation of South Africa (COHSASA) and the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). These Standards are internationally recognised and benchmark the quality of services that our members provide. APCC members are audited against the Palliative Healthcare Standards.

Q: How do hospices work?

A: This depends on the situation of each person. Each organisation has an admission process, where medical records are requested and they assess what is required for both the patient and loved ones. Recommendations are then made and the process for registration is then undertaken. When a patient dies, bereavement or grief support is provided, as it is considered to be an important aspect of the care in terms of 'healing' and promoting general emotional well-being. Medical Aids pay for the services provided to their members, some people pay for themselves and some people are subsidised by the APCC member.

Q: When should palliative care be considered?

A: When receiving a life-threatening diagnosis. Palliative care can help both the diagnosed person and their loved one's cope with aggressive treatments through the management of pain and symptoms and providing psychosocial and spiritual support. In order to enhance your well-being, it is highly recommended upon receiving a serious diagnosis that engagement is made with a palliative care centre as soon as possible. Inter-disciplinary teams typically consist of a medical doctor, nurse, social worker and home-based carers.

¹ Based on the National Department of Health's National Policy Framework and Strategy for Palliative Care.

² The National Policy Framework and Strategy for Palliative Care specifically identifies Hospices as Palliative Care Service Providers.

Q: Is the palliative care that APCC's members provide as good as what could be accessed elsewhere?

A: Hospices are recognized as 'specialists' in Palliative Care.³

Q: Are palliative care services only provided in in-patient units?

A: No. Care is provided primarily at the person's home as well as in frail care, step-down and child care facilities, hospitals and care homes for the elderly. Some APCC members have in-patient units (IPUs) where patients are provided with 24-hour care.

Q: If palliative care is engaged, is the doctor then out of the picture?

A: No. APCC members are comfortable working alongside the primary clinician or specialist. In most cases, the APCC members inter-disciplinary teams collaborate and work alongside the referring doctors. They also provide supportive care to loved ones; this may include advanced healthcare planning, as well as psychosocial and spiritual support.

Q: Does palliative care cover conditions such as HIV/AIDS, chronic respiratory diseases and more?

A: Yes. Anyone diagnosed with a life-threatening illness can benefit from palliative care. Adults and children with chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS, drug-resistant TB, chronic respiratory diseases, cardiovascular and neuromuscular diseases, MND and more; all benefit from palliative care. It would be helpful to check with the closest APCC member what their admission criteria are.

Q: Can APCC members deal with patients who need a high level of care?

A: Yes, APCC's members employ palliatively trained medical, nursing and psychosocial staff to provide a high standard of palliative care. They also have specialised knowledge and skills to prevent or alleviate distressing symptoms. To be a member of the APCC, members have to comply with the internationally recognised Standards for Palliative Healthcare Services. APCC members have been the pioneers of palliative care in South Africa since the 1980s.

Q: For how long is palliative care provided?

A: While people can move in and out of a palliative care service, they may remain beneficiaries of the services for as long as they (or their loved ones) need or wish to. Patients may be discharged from the service if they are doing well and able to function independently. This is always negotiated between the patient, family and members of the care team. We encourage everyone to engage with an APCC member from the point of diagnosis as this helps to dispel fears and provides insight into the holistic services that can be offered. Many people have benefitted from an improved quality of life through the supportive care received from APCC members.



³ The National Policy Framework and Strategy for Palliative Care specifically identifies Hospices as Palliative Care Service Providers

Q: Where can I get a list of APCC members in my area?

A: Go to www.apcc.org.za and go to FIND A HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE CENTRE. The members are all listed per region.



APCC

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members is

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