

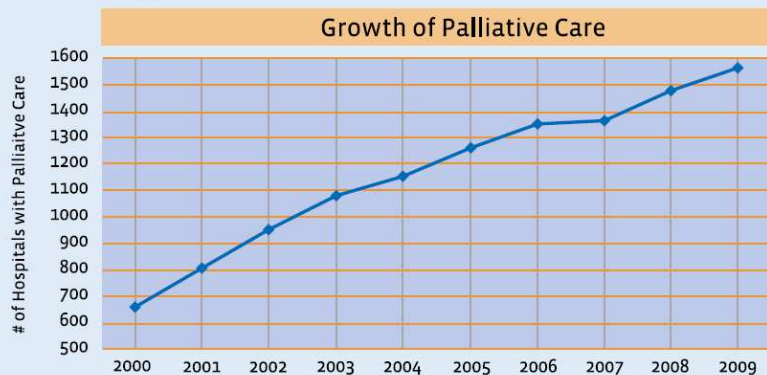
Palliative Care at a Glance

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care, or palliative medicine, is specialized medical care for people facing serious and chronic illness. It focuses on relief from symptoms, pain, and stress – whatever the diagnosis. The goal is to improve quality of life for both patient and family. Palliative care is provided by a team that includes physicians, nurses, and other specialists who work together with a patient's own doctor to provide an extra layer of support. It is appropriate at any age and any stage in a serious illness and can be provided along with curative treatment.

Growing Trend in Health Care

Over the last ten years palliative care has been one of the fastest growing trends in health care. In fact, the number of palliative care programs within hospital settings has increased approximately 138%, from more than 600 in 2000 to more than 1500 today.



Source: Center to Advance Palliative Care, March 2011

This growth has occurred primarily in response to the increasing number of Americans living with serious and chronic illnesses and to the caregiving realities faced by their families. But palliative care has also been embraced for the simple reason it gives patients and families control and choice over their own care. The strong partnership of patient, family and the palliative care team assures that treatment goals are established and coordinated and full communication is maintained in what is often a long, complex course of serious illness.

People Want Palliative Care

Palliative care is expected to increase as the public becomes more aware of its benefits. Recent public opinion research by the national polling firm Public Opinion Strategies reveals that even for those patients who are uninformed about palliative care, once they understand what it is, **92% report they would be highly likely to consider palliative care** for themselves or their families if they had a serious illness. **92% also said they believe patients should have access** to this type of care at hospitals nationwide.

Quality Care Leads to Cost Reduction

Today, approximately 90 million Americans are living with serious illness, and this number is expected to more than double over the next 25 years. About 20% of all Medicare beneficiaries have 5 or more chronic conditions, and two-thirds of Medicare spending goes to cover their care. This patient population is also the most likely to benefit from palliative care. Recent studies indicate that by closely matching treatments with a patient's goals, and improving their quality of life, palliative care can provide substantial cost reduction.

Policy Changes Would Help

Policy initiatives that address workforce needs, research and patient access could rapidly bring palliative care to scale in the United States. The implementation of such policies would help meet the needs of our sickest children and a growing population of older Americans with long-term chronic conditions.

