

Common misconceptions regarding hospice explained

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

There are many misconceptions about hospice, and Hospice of the Plains would like to clear some things up. Here are a few common misconceptions followed by clarification:

—Hospice is where you go when there is nothing more a doctor can do.

Hospice is not a place. It is the provision of services to those who are living with a terminal illness. The services are uniquely designed and based upon one's requests and expressed needs.

Hospice is not about dying! Rather, hospice promotes dignity, autonomy and the best quality of life possible while living with a terminal illness.

—To be eligible for hospice, I have to be in the final stages of dying.

Hospice patients may receive care for several months, depending upon the course of the illness. There is no fixed limit on the amount of time a patient may continue to receive hospice services, as long as his/her primary physician believes that if the course of the illness continues at the present pace, one most likely will not live beyond six months.

The Colorado Pediatric Hospice Waiver is not time-limited, although the infant, toddler, child or teenager must be living with an ultimately terminal illness. Hospice of the Plains is a Colorado Pediatric Hospice provider.

—Quality care at the end of life is very expensive.

Medicare beneficiaries pay nothing for hospice. For those ineligible for Medicare, most insurance plans, HMOs and managed care plans provide hospice benefits. The individual is responsible for deductibles and medical expenses unrelated to one's terminal illness.

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—If I chose hospice care, I have to leave my home.

Hospice care is provided wherever the patient calls home.

—Families are not able to care for people with life limiting illnesses.

Family members are encouraged, supported and trained by hospice professionals to care for their loved ones. Hospice of the Plains staff is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week for emergencies, questions or to provide support for family and friends caring for their loved ones.

—Hospice is just for the elderly or for those with cancer.

Hospice is for anyone living with any terminal condition, regardless of age.

—We live sixty miles from our physician.

Hospice of the Plains staff and volunteers live throughout northeastern Colorado, allowing them to “take care of their own” whether it is in Wiggins, Laird, Last Chance, Julesburg, Hale or Peetz.

—After a death, hospice care ends.

Bereavement services and grief support are available to family members without cost for a year after the death of a patient. Community support groups are also available throughout the six-county service area.

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To learn more about hospice and to avoid misinformation, visit: www.hospiceoftheplains.org or call Hospice of the Plains at 970-562-7901, 970-842-6060 or 970-332-4116.