

## Shattering the Myths of Hospice

*Did you know that there are several myths about hospice care in the community? Even healthcare professionals have some misconceptions about what hospice care is and who would benefit from this specialized end-of-life care.*

**Myth #1** Hospice is a place.

**Fact:** Hospice care usually takes place in the comfort of your home, but can be provided in many settings including skilled nursing homes, residential care facilities and the hospital.

**Myth #2** Hospice is for the day of death.

**Fact:** Hospice was designed to meet the unique needs of terminally ill patients and their families during the last 6 months of life.

**Myth #3** Hospice is only for cancer patients.

**Fact:** Hospice cares for many patients with different diagnoses.

**Myth #4** Patients can only receive hospice care for a limited amount of time.

**Fact:** The Medicare/Medi Cal benefit and most commercial health plans cover hospice care as long as the patient continues to meet the necessary criteria. Some hospice patients stabilize and are discharged from service. These patients are allowed to come back onto service when they are more appropriate for hospice care.

**Myth #5** Hospice patients must have a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) status.

**Fact:** Hospice patients do not have to have a DNR in place to be admitted to hospice care.

**Myth #6** Patients have to give up their own physician when they are admitted to hospice.

**Fact:** Patients may keep their own physician; they can see that physician in their office and Medicare will reimburse the physician for those office visits.

**Myth #7** Hospice patients can't have feeding tubes or IV hydration.

**Fact:** Each patient is evaluated on a case by case basis and receives the treatments necessary to provide support and comfort.

**Myth #8** Hospice provides nursing care in the home 24 hours a day.

**Fact:** The Hospice Team makes intermittent visits to the patient in their home, Skilled Nursing Facility or Extended Care Facility. A Hospice Nurse is available by phone and visits when needed 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

**Myth #9** Hospice care is expensive.

**Fact:** Medicare and Medi Cal pay for hospice services at 100% coverage. Many commercial health plans now offer a hospice benefit with little out of pocket expenses to the patient or family. The financial burdens usually associated with caring for a terminally ill patient are minimal.

**Myth #10** Hospice means giving up hope.

**Fact:** Hope never goes away. When the hope for a cure is no longer possible the hope for quality of life and spending time with family and friends becomes the focus.