



Heart Talk: Discussing Palliative Care and End of Life

Module 5:
Evidence-based Education for Health
Care Professionals



Palliative Care

- Symptom therapy without affecting the underlying disease process
- Does not require patient to be in final months of life
- Can be concurrent with curative therapy

Hospice Care

- Treatment for the final 6 months of life
- Includes palliation
- End of life (EOL) care for patients and families
- Increased services and support

Starting the Conversation

- Always check with MD first
 - Very frustrating for patients and families if providers give different opinions on prognosis
- Don't assume!
 - Many patients at or near EOL are never told their condition may lead to death in the near future

Begin the Discussion


- Encourage patients to think about “*What’s most important?*”
 - Staying out of the hospital?
 - Returning to previous level of function?
 - Time with family, significant others?

Begin the Discussion

- Practical considerations
 - Who will make decisions if they cannot speak for themselves?
 - What are their feelings about life support, mechanical ventilation, breathing tubes, etc.?

Begin the Discussion

- Conversations need to be ongoing
- Very little accomplished in one discussion
- End of life decisions are a process
- Social work consult can be helpful



For information
on the Heart Talk videos,
please visit us on our website:

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