

# Breaking the Stereotypes: Hospice



According to a National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, nearly 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries were enrolled in hospice care for at least one day in 2017, and the figure continues to rise in the years following. Hospice is more than care for a terminally ill patient; for many it is hope. However, hospice care is associated with many misconceptions, turning away many individuals that may benefit from these services. Hospice is about increasing the lives of those that have been diagnosed with terminal illness by providing necessary support, services, and resources to the patient and the patient's family.

## Debunking the Hospice Myths

### *Myth #1: Hospice is only for those that have given up on life*

It is common for others to think that hospice is about dying when, in reality, it is about bringing comfort to patients so they can live this stage of their life to the fullest. Hospice provides medical care, pain management, family support, and emotional and spiritual support to the patients' needs and desires. The goal is to increase the patient's quality of life and provide support for family

members to ensure that the patient is happy and comfortable. Although people do pass away while in hospice, there are still patients that graduate from hospice and return with a longer, expected prognosis.

*Myth #2: Only patients with cancer use hospice care*

Nearly three-quarters of hospice patients are not diagnosed with cancer. Cancer is known to be one of the most aggressive forms of disease and one of the most difficult to treat. Though this is true, hospice patients are diagnosed with a wide variety of diagnoses, including heart disease, dementia, lung disease, stroke, chronic kidney disease, and more. Hospice teams are trained to manage the symptoms of many diagnoses, not just cancer.

*Myth #3: Hospice care can only be given at a hospital or facility*

Hospice teams come wherever the patients call home. Again, the goal is to make sure the patients are happy and comfortable, so it is important that they are in a setting where they feel that way. While hospice care can be administered in a hospital or facility, it does not have to be. Hospice is not a location of care, but rather a method of care.

*Myth #4: Hospice care is very expensive*

Hospice is a benefit provided by Medicaid/Medicare and is also covered by many private insurance companies. People misunderstand the financial end of hospice, which leads to terminally ill patients not receiving the care that they need and deserve. In order to qualify for hospice care, Medicaid and Medicare require that the patient meets the following criteria

- The patient's hospice doctor and primary care physician certify that the patient is terminally ill and has a life expectancy of 6 months or less
- The patient accepts palliative care instead of curative treatment
- The patient signs a statement that they choose hospice care instead of other Medicare-covered benefits

*Myth #5: Hospice care ends with the patient's passing*

Hospice does not end with the patient's passing. Most hospice care offers bereavement and grief support services for a year after the patient has passed. Many hospice services also help make funeral arrangements to provide support for other issues that may arise after the patient's death.

Hospice is full of hope as patients feel relief and comfort during a difficult time. Many of the stereotypes about hospice care lead people away from hospice when they could be receiving care that helps them physically, emotionally and spiritually. Through time, the hospice patient and their family begin looking forward to tomorrow. The benefits of hospice care can empower both the hospice patients and their caregivers as the patients gain control of how they want to live out their last final months.

If you are looking for hospice care in the Cleveland area, feel free to explore your options at McGregor and Judson, where we put your care first.



A Collaboration for a Special Kind of Care

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<https://www.vitas.com/hospice-and-palliative-care-basics/when-is-it-time-for-hospice/hospice-is-not-giving-up>

<https://hospicechenango.org/breaking-the-stigma-around-hospice-and-palliative-care/>