

What is Hospice?

- **Hospice** is a special concept of care designed to provide comfort and support to patients and their families when a life-limiting illness no longer responds to cure-oriented treatments.
 - **Hospice care** neither prolongs life nor hastens death. Hospice staff and volunteers offer a specialized knowledge of medical care, including pain management.
 - **The goal of hospice care** is to improve the quality of a patient's last days by offering comfort and dignity.
 - **Hospice care** is provided by a team of specially trained professionals, volunteers and family members.
 - **Hospice** addresses all symptoms of a disease, with a special emphasis on controlling a patient's pain and discomfort.
 - **Hospice** deals with the emotional, social and spiritual impact of the disease on the patient and the patient's family and friends.
 - **Hospice** offers a variety of bereavement and counseling services to families before and after a patient's death.
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History

The word "hospice" stems from the Latin word "hospitium" meaning guesthouse. It was originally used to describe a place of shelter for weary and sick travelers returning from religious pilgrimages. During the 1960's, Dr. Cicely Saunders, a British physician began the modern hospice movement by establishing St. Christopher's Hospice near London. St. Christopher's organized a team approach to professional caregiving, and was the first program to use modern pain management techniques to compassionately care for the dying. The first hospice in the United States was established in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974.

Today there are more than 3,100 hospice programs in the United States. Puerto Rico and Guam. Hospice programs cared for nearly 540,000 people in the United States in 1998.

Hospice is not a place but a concept of care. Eighty percent of hospice care is provided in the patient's home, family member's home and in nursing homes. Inpatient hospice facilities are sometimes available to assist with caregiving.