

Regional Palliative Care Program

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, including physical, psychosocial and spiritual (World Health Organization, 2008). The Regional Palliative Care Program (RPCP) is a community based model of palliative care services designed to increase access to high quality, cost effective palliative care services.

RPCP focuses on providing access to palliative care support in the home and in all regional health care facilities, while shifting the main area of end-of-life care from acute care, to home and hospice (hospices are located in continuing or long term care facilities). The program addresses clinical, educational, research and operational areas. From April 2005 to March 2008, approximately 88 – 93% of patients referred for services with the RPCP had a diagnosis of cancer.

Central to RPCP is a patient and family focus, with outcomes influencing the direction of the program. The clinical components of the RPCP include palliative home care, palliative hospice, Regional Palliative Care Community Consult Team, Royal Alexandra Hospital Consult Team, University of Alberta Hospitals Consult Team, Symptom Control and Palliative Care Team at the Cross Cancer Institute, and the Tertiary Palliative Care Unit at the Grey Nuns Community Hospital. *(Patients under the age of 18 years requiring palliative care are supported by the Pediatric Palliative Care Program at the Stollery Children's Hospital, and referral is made by the attending physician. The Pediatric Palliative Care Program and the Regional Palliative Care Program have a collaborative relationship.)*

RPCP has criteria for admission for each clinical area.

Criteria for Admission

Patients referred to any of the palliative care services offered by RPCP:

- Are experiencing a life-threatening illness
- May require active care to alleviate distressing symptoms related to physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs

The following are admission criteria specific to each clinical area:

Home Living Program – Palliative Home Care Services

- Desire for person/family to be cared for at home
- Expected length of stay approximately 3-4 months
- Does not require acute/tertiary care
- Primary care is provided by a Family Physician
- No age restriction

Palliative Care Consultation:
Regional Palliative Care Community Consult Team
Royal Alexandra Hospital Palliative Care Program
University of Alberta Hospital Palliative Care Program

- Referral is made by the attending physician, who also continues to provide primary care
- Age 18+
- Reasons for referral include:
 - Symptom management
 - Assessment for admission to hospice
 - Assessment for admission to Tertiary Palliative Care Unit

Palliative Hospice

- Goals of care consistent with hospice philosophy
- Acute/tertiary care not required
- End-of-life care cannot be managed at home
- Primary care is provided by a Family Physician
- Agrees to transfer to an appropriate care setting (e.g. facility, home) if condition stabilizes
- Prognosis 2 months or less, exceptions are expected
- Age 18+
- Accepts DNR status

Tertiary Palliative Care Unit at Grey Nuns Community Hospital

- Intensive, interdisciplinary intervention required for severe symptom problems for which management has not been successful
- Symptoms require ongoing monitoring/assessment
- When stable, patient will be discharged to the most appropriate care setting
- Average length of stay is 3-4 weeks, exceptions are expected
- Age 18+
- Accepts DNR status

Symptom Control and Palliative Care Team at Cross Cancer Institute (CCI)

- Management of symptoms and/or establishment of community supports in an inpatient, interdisciplinary clinic, or outpatient setting for patients with cancer receiving treatment at the CCI
- Referral is made by the attending physician
- Age 18+