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My Volunteer Hospice Training – The Hospice Team

“Hospice provides support and care for persons in the last phases of incurable disease so that they may live as fully and as comfortable as possible.” - Hospice Volunteer Training Book 2009.

The Hospice team includes:

- (1) **The Patient and Family:** The team works closely with the patient and family to provide support and information regarding pain control, symptom management, psychological/social needs, and spiritual concerns.
- (2) **Physicians** initially make the referral for a patient to receipt Hospice benefits (patient must be expected to not live longer than six months). Additionally, the Hospice Medical Director also consults with Hospice Nurses regarding the patient’s plan of care.
- (3) **Nurses** make regular visits to their patients to monitor any changes in the patient’s condition, and administer medications and devices for pain relief and symptom control.
- (4) **Social Workers** provide counseling and social support for the patient and their family. They assess coping, care-giving and bereavement needs and facilitate support systems – medical, financial, and legal – if needed.
- (5) **Home Health Aides** establish a supportive, loving, trusting relationship with patients while providing personal care, such as bathing, dressing, and grooming.
- (6) **Hospice Chaplains** provide spiritual and bereavement support and counseling for patients and families who wish it.
- (7) **Volunteers** provide respite care and support for the caregiver. They might help the patient physically to sit or get to the bathroom. They might just sit with the patient or family members to listen.

This whole team works together to identify the needs of the patient and their family. The process of dying is foreign territory for most patients and families - emotions are at their highest. In addition, there are many difficult decisions and tasks to attend to. As I go through this Hospice Volunteer Training I find myself increasingly in awe of the importance of the service Hospice brings to its clients – without asking for any payment.

I am lucky to be involved in this important work. I am excited to apply what I learn about the dying process to help me be an advocate and counselor for my clients on these matters.