

What is palliative care?

Palliative care is a branch of health care that attends to only those with an advanced life-limiting illness. A life-limiting illness is one that has no cure. The focus of this area of care is the patients and their family/whānau's total care i.e. physical/tinana, social/whānaungatanga, emotional/hinengaro, and spiritual/wairua wellbeing. Care is specific to each person and focuses on helping them to live the best that they can for as long as they are able. This care can be provided in home or in another place e.g. hospice, hospital or long term residential facility. Specialist palliative care is provided by a skilled team of health professionals who have undergone specific training and or accreditation in palliative care. In Northland this is one of the four Hospices of Northland or the Hospital Palliative Care Liaison Team (based at Whangarei Hospital).

The care that Hospices provide is **free to patients**. All hospices have a contract with the Northland District Health Board to provide palliative services to the residents of the Northland. This contract only covers about 70% of the cost of providing this service. The rest is funded by donations, grants, fundraising and bequests.

What is the difference between specialist & generalist palliative care?

The Palliative Care Working Party, 2008 defined two separate levels for the provision of palliative care. These are:

Generalist Palliative Care is palliative care provided for those affected by life-limiting illness as an integral part of standard clinical practice by any healthcare professional who is not part of a specialist palliative care team. It is provided in the community by general practice teams, Maori and Pacific health providers, allied health teams, district nurses, residential care staff, community support services and community paediatric teams. It is provided in hospitals by general adult and paediatric medical and surgical teams, as well as disease specific teams for instance oncology, respiratory, renal, intensive care and cardiac teams.

Providers of generalist palliative care will have defined links with specialist palliative care team(s) for the purposes of support and advice, or in order to refer persons with complex needs. They will also have access to palliative care education and learning to support their practice.

Specialist Palliative Care is palliative care provided by those who have undergone specific training and/or accreditation in palliative care/medicine working in the context of an expert interdisciplinary team of palliative care health professionals. Specialist palliative care may be provided by hospices (community), hospital based palliative care services, and paediatric specialist palliative care teams. Specialist palliative care will increasingly be provided through services that meet standards developed nationally and that work exclusively in palliative care. Specialist palliative care practice builds on the palliative care provided by generalist providers and reflects a higher level of expertise in complex symptom management, spiritual support, psychosocial support, cultural support, and grief and loss support. Specialist palliative care provision works in two ways:

1. Directly: to provide direct management and support to person, their families and whānau where complex palliative care needs exceeds the resources of the generalist provider. Specialist palliative care involvement with any person and their family and whānau can be continuous or episodic depending on their assessed changing need.

Complex need in this context is defined as a level of need that exceeds the resources of the generalist team: this may be in any of the domains of care - physical, psychosocial, spiritual or cultural for example.

2. Indirectly: to provide advice, support, education and training to other health professionals and volunteers to support their generalist provision of palliative care. The teams/services involved in providing comprehensive and interdisciplinary specialist palliative care may vary in the type and complexity of need that they are able to address, depending on the populations they serve and the funding available.

Ministry of Health, 2008

What services do Hospices offer?

Hospice prides itself on the range of services that it offers. These include:

- Community care, which also includes a palliative care liaison team based at Whangarei Hospital
- Inpatient care (for respite (booked or acute), intensive symptom management and end of life care)
- Shared care with other health professionals
- Counselling
- Social work
- Volunteer services,
- Bereavement support
- Family support
- Chaplaincy support
- An extensive pool of equipment for homecare
- 24 hour telephone advice support

Referrals to Specialist Support

When is referral appropriate?

Specialist Palliative Care support for those with a diagnosis of an advanced/progressive life-limiting illness may be required when:

- Symptoms relating to their illness are not able to be managed effectively
- The patient and their family/whānau require more intensive care of their holistic issues related to the illness – these could be spiritual, psycho-social, psychological
- Respite care is required to maintain care at home
- Occasionally in-patient care is required for the final stages of their disease
- Staff members require support to care effectively for those in their care.

How do I make a referral for palliative care support?

In Northland there are four Hospice services providing specialist palliative care based in Whangarei, Kaipara, Kerikeri and Kaitiāia. In general, Hospice service is available to anyone with an illness for which there is no cure, is getting worse and is going to result in death. People can refer themselves, or a friend, family member or doctor or nurse may refer them to the service. People have to be agreeable to having Hospice involved. Hospice staff always check that what is offered is acceptable and wanted. If you are not sure if referral is appropriate or what your local Hospice is able to offer, please contact them directly for further advice.

www.northhavenhospice.org.nz

North Haven Hospice **09 437 3355**

Fax 09 437 6219 admin@northhavenhospice.org.nz

Hospice Kaipara **09 439 3330**

Fax 09 439 3532 manager.hki@xtra.co.nz

Hospice Mid Northland **09 407 7799**

Fax 09 407 7784 manager@hospicemn.org.nz

Far North Community Hospice **09 408 0092**

Fax 09 408 0342 admin@fnpacc.org.nz

Hospital Palliative Care Liaison Team 09 430 4100 – ask the operator to transfer you

At the time of referral it is helpful to include copies of important letters and copies of test results as well as discharge summaries from recent hospital admissions. This will help the hospice gain a clearer more in-depth picture of the current situation.

All of the Hospices of Northland document their patient notes on PalCare (a web-based patient management system) and if you wish, you can be provided access to these notes to assist you in the patients on-going care.