



"I Wish I Would Have Called Hospice Sooner"

By Denise Stancill, Director of Business Development,
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I have worked in healthcare for nearly 14 years and never fully understood the complexity of it until I had loved ones close to me become very ill. It was not until I sat at the bedside during many months of their illness and recovery, when I fully realized the toll serious illness can take on both patient and caregiver.

This is true for many who have never seen significant illness, either as a patient or a caregiver. Having limited exposure to challenging symptoms from difficult diseases, and the need to maneuver through the healthcare arena, make seeing the need for hospice services difficult because it is just not something you think about. Then when faced with the reality of a terminal diagnosis, the complexities of end of life get factored in and make life overwhelming.

The reason hospices exist is to help people and their loved ones overcome feeling overwhelmed. Hospice brings emotional, physical and spiritual peace to a complicated time. The relief that hospice brings makes the phrase "I wish I would have called hospice sooner" commonly heard by hospice providers following care of a hospice patient.

Why do families continually say, "I wish I would have called hospice sooner?"

- Life is already complicated. Daily needs of family, the work day and the household routine make for busy schedules. Serious illness can bring significant interruption to the daily routine.

- Not everyone interprets information the same. Family dynamics bring varying degrees of complexity to a hospice scenario. Often it isn't out of lack of love for a person, but differing opinions on how a loved one's end of life wishes should be carried out, that heightens the emotional response to what is occurring during this sensitive time of life.
- People who are terminally ill or suffer from advanced illness are very sick. Because of their condition they may experience painful days and nights due to symptoms associated with their disease.
- The stigma associated with the word hospice makes individuals reluctant to accept care.
- It's difficult to know what to expect during those final days. Fear of the unknown makes it difficult to find peace as changes in condition occur.
- People grieve differently. Some find solace in spending time alone and others heal while in the company of others. Learning how to travel through grief individually and as a family is often a new experience for many.

Calling hospice early on helps prepare patients and their loved ones. Hospice caregivers work around the clock to ensure everyone understands the signs and symptoms of approaching death in preparation for those final moments; all while delivering comfort, care and dignity during care.



For more information about Hospice of Holland programs and services, to make a referral, or for answers to your questions about hospice care, please call 616-396-2972. View www.hollandhospice.org and hear from others why care from Hospice of Holland made a difference for their loved one.

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Understand Hospice is a service of Hospice of Holland, whose mission is to provide end-of-life care to patients facing terminal illness and their caregivers. Contact us today at **616-396-2972** to learn how hospice can help.