

Your Care Team

Hospice Care is a multi-disciplinary form of care that offers an entire team of professionals to provide an individualized plan of care for each patient. That is the beauty of hospice care; the patient gets to decide which team members will help him or her achieve the most appropriate end of life care.

The Patient's Physician

The patient's physician may remain as involved in the patient's care as they like. After all, he or she has often provided health care for this person for many years. The relationship between patient and physician may have a huge investment of time and caring. Many times it is the patient's physician who first recommends that hospice become involved. Medications, treatments, therapies and hospice services are ordered by the physician, who has ongoing communication with the hospice team members. The physician may oversee the patient's hospice plan of care even when the patient is no longer able to visit the physician's office.

Gaston Hospice Medical Director

Gaston Hospice employs a full-time medical director, Dr. Michael Case, to act as liaison between the hospice staff and the local medical community. His responsibilities may include:

- Making rounds with patients at the Robin Johnson House
- Participating in the development of individual care plans
- Certifying, or recertifying patient's Medicare hospice benefit eligibility
- Acting as consultant for the patient's attending physician or other physicians who might need more information about hospice care
- And making home visits if needed to assist in management of patient's symptoms.

Admissions Nurse

A registered nurse will make the first hospice visit to every patient. Her job is to evaluate the patient for admission to hospice by assessing their physical condition. She will explain all hospice services, get consent forms signed, evaluate the home to see if the patient needs medical equipment, inventory the patient's medication for the purpose of placing the order with the hospice pharmacy, and of course, answering any questions posed by the patient or their family.

Primary Nurse

A registered nurse will visit the patient at home, wherever home may be, on a regular and "as needed" basis to evaluate the patient's comfort level and provide symptom management care. Ongoing needs for equipment, medications and supplies are assessed at every visit and any changes in the patient's condition are discussed and shared with the physician. Changes in medications and plan of care may be made accordingly. Ongoing caregiver education is a vital role of the nurse so that the caregiver has the appropriate knowledge to give their loved one the best possible care.

Social Worker

Every Gaston Hospice patient is assigned a social worker to assist with financial and legal affairs. The social worker may assist in obtaining legal documents such as Healthcare Powers of Attorney, Legal Wills, Do Not Resuscitate orders, as well as other legal documents. They may help access community resources, such as Medicaid, food stamps, emergency assistance programs, social security disability and many other programs. They may assist with admission to respite programs, nursing homes, assisted living centers and the Robin Johnson House. They may also provide counseling services for depression, anxiety, family conflict, stress and other issues. They may help with discussions on difficult subjects that the patient or family may have concerns about.

Certified Nursing Assistant

A CNA may be assigned when the patient declines to the point where they need help with personal care such as bathing, washing hair, shaving, skin and nail care, mouth care, changing bed linens, and dressing.

Chaplain

The Gaston Hospice chaplain is an ordained minister who is available to support the patient and family with the spiritual care issues such as faith, prayer and meditation, forgiveness, healing, and strengthening family relationships. The hospice chaplain always honors the patient's established beliefs and values.

Bereavement Counselor

All Gaston Hospice bereavement counselors are masters' degreed, licensed professional counselors (LPCs) who have special training in grief and loss. They may provide individual or family counseling for children and adults either in the home or in the office, they may help with treatment of anxiety and depression, identify and address concerns surrounding the anticipation of the pending loss, assist in addressing unresolved issues, previous losses, or family conflict that is affecting the current situation. The bereavement counselor supports the primary caregiver and family for at least one year after the loss of a loved one. Many support groups are available to Gaston Hospice families and to anyone in the community through the New Hope Counseling Center for Grief and Loss.

Family Support Volunteers

The family support volunteer is an essential part of the Gaston Hospice team. They are highly trained in the hospice mission and philosophy, and may provide respite for the caregiver, companionship for the patient, assistance with errands and some light housekeeping.

Volunteers are asked to give a minimum of two hours per week to their patient.

On-Call staff

A registered nurse is never more than a phone call away from Gaston Hospice patients. When the patient's regular nurse is off-duty, the on-call nurse is there to address any issues that arise anytime of the day or night, seven days a week. Problems may be resolved with a simple phone call, or the nurse may need to visit the patient at home. Either way, the patient's needs are handled in a timely manner and the regular nurse will be advised of any issues when he or she comes back on duty.

There is also a non-medical staff member on call at all hours. This staff member may be a social worker, a bereavement counselor or a chaplain. They provide emotional support for the patient or family in times of crisis.