



Hospice of the Calumet Area NEWS

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Dartmouth Atlas Report on Cancer Care at End of Life Identifies Gap between Patient Wishes and Care Received

NHPCO Commends Dartmouth Atlas Project and Calls on Hospitals to Increase Access to Hospice Care

(Alexandria, VA) – A new report released today from the Dartmouth Atlas Project showing that individuals in some areas of the country are far less likely to receive comfort care in accordance with their wishes and has drawn the attention of the nation’s hospice and palliative care community.

This first-ever report from the Dartmouth Atlas Project on cancer care at the end of life, found that across the US, about 29 percent of patients with advanced cancer died in a hospital between 2003 and 2007. And in 50 academic medical centers, fewer than half of these patients received hospice care.

Furthermore, the study authors state that many patients are aggressively treated with curative therapies they may not want, and, “for frail elderly patients, and any patient with advanced cancer, these treatments have limited or no benefit.”



“Hospice and palliative care has been proven to be compassionate and effective but too many patients never get it or get it too late. It should be an integral part of care, not an afterthought.”

– John R. Lumpkin, M.D., M.P.H., senior vice president and the director of the Health Care Group at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“The Dartmouth Atlas Project is to be commended for undertaking this thorough examination of end-of-life care for Medicare beneficiaries with advanced cancer,” said J. Donald Schumacher, president and CEO of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. “While the findings of variation in care are not necessarily a surprise, one of the key messages that I take away from this report is the critical need for hospitals and all the healthcare professionals to ensure that all patients are informed earlier about the course of an illness and the range of options available – options that include hospice and palliative care.”

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Mission Statement

Hospice of the Calumet Area, a not-for-profit hospice, is dedicated to improving the quality of life through compassionate care for individuals and families facing an end-of-life illness.

The likelihood that a Medicare patient with advanced cancer will die with the support of hospice care, or in the hospital without hospice, varies markedly depending on where he or she lives and receives care. The percent of cancer patients dying in a hospital varied threefold among patients receiving most of their care at academic medical centers.

“It’s important to recognize that this report is not a negative comment on care in our nation’s hospitals or among academic medical centers, rather, it’s a much needed reminder that healthcare professionals must work to help patients and families understand where the course of their illness may take them. And, when cure is not possible, it is our duty to offer the robust benefits that the hospice team can provide,” added Schumacher.

Hospice care provides coordinated care delivered by a team of interdisciplinary professionals that are trained to address the special needs a person has at the end of life. The hospice team provides pain and symptom relief as well as emotional and spiritual support for the patient and the family.

Reminder:

Your patient’s hospice experience is a reflection on you. In order for them to receive our expert care, you need to specify ---

“Hospice of the Calumet Area”

More than 1.56 million Americans received care from the nation’s hospices last year. However, 34% of patients died or were discharged in seven days or less – too short a time to take full advantage of all of the services available under the hospice, including support for family caregivers.

“In more than 30 years of running hospice programs, the most frequent comment I would hear from patients and families was *why they didn’t learn about hospice care earlier*,” Schumacher noted.

For several years, NHPCO’S Caring Connections, www.caringinfo.org, has been providing healthcare professionals and consumers with information about care options and caregiving when facing serious or life-limiting illness. Information to help patients and family caregivers understand the benefits of hospice care is available at:

www.HospiceCalumet.org or 219-922-2732.

~ Craig Harrell, *Director of Community Relations and Marketing*

The Dartmouth Atlas Project is run by the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice and principally funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A link to the full study along with local hospital statistics can be found at www.dartmouthatlas.org.

NHPCO is the oldest and largest nonprofit membership organization representing hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. NHPCO’S mission is to lead and mobilize social change for improved care at the end of life, www.nhpc.org.

*To make a referral or request an informational visit, please call
Hospice of the Calumet Area at
219-922-2732 . 708-895-8332 . 219-736-2422*