

What is hospice...and when is it appropriate for the Alzheimer's patient?

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By William Hammond, J.D.

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Hospice was established in the Middle Ages when shelters called hospices were available to travelers who had no place to stay. A couple of centuries later the first hospice was founded in London in 1668. The founder, Cicely Saunders, believed that these institutions geared to curing people were ignoring the special needs of the dying.

The first hospice in the United States was started in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974. From that beginning, the American model stressed hospice as a home service. Many of these hospices have helped a great number of families make their final days with their loved ones warm and memorable. Many terminally ill people and their families ask, "How will I know when it is the right time to call hospice?" There is not really an answer to this question. It all depends of individual circumstances and the stage of the patient in the illness.

The hospice staff is qualified and generally consists of a chaplain, certified nursing assistants, a medical director, registered nurse and social worker. They can assist you and the patient in many different areas: medically, psychologically, and spiritually. Some hospice agencies provide bereavement care to the family for several months following death.

Here are some of the signs that will let you know when to make your first call:

- If life expectancy is six months or less for an Alzheimer's patient. If the patient outlives this initial prognosis, the primary care physician may recertify the patient for a supplementary 60 day periods. Patients who stabilize may also come on and off hospice, as per their doctor's evaluation.
- If there are no more options for curative treatment and/or the individual does not wish to pursue further curative treatment.
- If pain and symptoms have begun to interfere with the quality of life of your loved ones and it becomes too difficult for them to stay at home without assistance.
- If adult children wish to learn more about the options for a parent's care and how to cope with the final

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stage, death.

When you decide to call hospice, you will not be left alone. The hospice team will support you and your needs. Chaplains present on the premises will guide you spiritually to ease the pain and suffering of a loss. Most hospices have group support meetings that will assist you.

To find a hospice in your area, here are the following options:

- The yellow pages directory : www.yellowpages.com
- Hospital Medical Social Workers: hospital social workers may provide you with a list of hospices in your area.
- You can search on Internet search engines by typing "finding a hospice in my area."
- And often the best way to find hospice care for your loved one is simply to ask your doctor. He or she

will be able to give you some recommendations.

William G. Hammond, JD is a nationally known elder law attorney and founder of The Alzheimer's Resource Center. He is a frequent guest on radio and television and has developed innovative solutions to guide families who have a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's. For more information you can visit his website at www.BeatAlzheimers.com

Long Term Care Options In Florida

By Jessica Farrell

In the state of Florida, almost one quarter of the residents are over the age of 60. Quality long-term care is very important for many of these older Floridians. The Florida Agency of Health Care Administration (AHCA) regulates Health Care Facilities throughout the state and also administers Florida's Medicaid program.

Below are a few of the long term care facilities regulated through AHCA:

Assisted Living Facilities: Provides housing, meals and some personal services for residents. Residents have to meet certain functional criteria and must be ambulatory and able to perform daily living activities like eating and able to care for basic bodily functions. Bed ridden residents are not accepted. Medicaid will pay for such a facility if both the resident and facility are eligible.

Adult Day Care

These are less than 24 hour care facilities. They offer therapeutic programs impaired adults. These centers offer many activities such as exercise, education, health screening and behavior modification. These centers also serve as a reprieve to the primary caregivers. These programs may be covered by Medicaid.

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Adult Family - Care Homes:

These family-type living arrangements provide a private home for up to 5 aged or disabled people (not related). The owner lives with the residents.

The residents must not be bed ridden and are subject to other criteria as described in Florida law.

Adult family care homes are for residents that do not require more care than can be provided by the owners.

In some cases Medicaid will pay if both the resident and the AFCH are eligible.

Hospice:

Hospice is a program that coordinates professional services including nutritional counseling, pastoral services, social work, and many other services for the terminally ill. These services can be provided at the hospital, hospice facility or the patient's residence.

Medicare or Medicaid will pay for these services if the patient is eligible.



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