

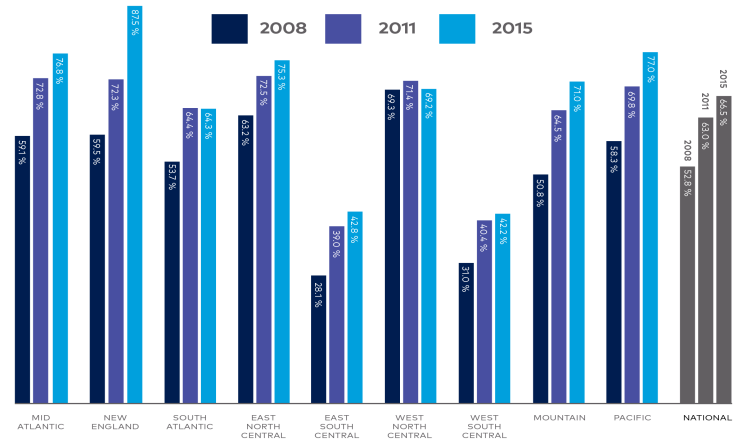
Palliative Care at a Glance



What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care improves quality, controls cost, and enhances patient and family satisfaction for the rapidly expanding population of individuals with serious or life-threatening illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a team of doctors, nurses, and other specialists who work with the patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is appropriate at any age and at any state in a serious illness and can be provided along with curative treatment to help patients get well faster.

Graph B. Percent of hospitals with a palliative care program by census region (2008, 2011, 2015)
Most regions continue to see growth in palliative care programs.



Credit: Center to Advance Palliative Care

Growing Trend in Health Care

Over the last ten years, palliative care has been one of the fastest-growing trends in health care. 67 percent of U.S. hospitals with fifty or more beds report palliative care teams, up from 63 percent in 2011 and 53 percent in 2008¹. This growth has occurred primarily in response to the growing number of Americans living with chronic and serious illness, and to the realities of caregiving faced by their families. Palliative care has also been embraced because it's really about giving patients more control. It's about including their family members and caregivers in the decisions they make about their treatment. It's about coordinating their doctors and medicines and making sure patients know what to do when they're discharged from the hospital. It's about making sure their pain is properly managed, that psychosocial concerns are identified and treated, and other symptoms such as nausea or shortness of breath are addressed. It's about all of the things we should be doing to help patients get well and have better lives.

Quality Care Leads to Cost Reduction

Today, approximately 90 million Americans are living with serious illness, and this number is expected to more than double over the next 25 years. About 20 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries have 5 or more chronic conditions, and two-thirds of Medicare spending goes to cover their care². This patient population is also the most likely to benefit from palliative care. Recent studies indicate that by closely matching treatments with a patient's goals, and improving their quality of life, palliative care can provide substantial cost reduction.

Policy Changes Would Help

ACS CAN has led an initiative to improve the lives of cancer patients by making treatment of their pain and other symptoms, and coordination of their care standard protocol during their treatment for cancer. H.R. 3119, the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act, establishes Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers to improve the training of health professionals, establishes a national campaign to inform patients, families and health professionals about the benefits of palliative care and the services, and directs expanded NIH funds to improve the delivery of palliative care to patients with serious illnesses.

References

1. Morrison, R. Sean, MD; Meier, Diane E., MD. America's Care of Serious Illness. Center to Advance Palliative Care (2015).
2. Ibid