

Sample Palliative Care Letters to the Editor

Below are talking points and sample letters to the editor (LTEs) that the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network has previously shared with their volunteers to use with their local papers. These letters have already been published in newspapers across the country, so please do not distribute these to be published as is.

Quality of Life Talking Points for LTEs

- From the very moment a person hears the words “you have cancer,” he or she is dealing with the anxiety and fear of the unknown, and later with the pain and side effects of treatment, and finally, the lingering physical side effects of survivorship.
- There is an extra layer of support widely available to patients and their caregivers called palliative care.
- In addition to their curative treatment, patients can receive help from a team that often includes a palliative care specialist, a nurse, a social worker, a pharmacist, and a psychologist to better coordinate their care and manage their symptoms while they undergo treatment.
- This type of care is important for all ages and all stages of a patient’s diagnosis.
- Palliative care can add more life to patients’ days and more days to their lives.
- Studies have shown that patients who receive palliative care have better quality of life, they sometimes live longer, and it saves the health system money by reducing hospital stays and intensive care.
- ACS CAN is leading an effort to make palliative care more easily available to people who need it, by supporting a bipartisan bill that focuses on palliative care research, workforce training, and public education.

LTE #1

Treating a Patient Beyond Their Disease

Earlier this month I traveled to Washington D.C. with hundreds of fellow advocates, cancer patients, survivors and their loved ones from across the country who volunteer for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). We called on Congress to support legislation that emphasizes patients’ quality of life during treatment for a serious disease such as cancer. No one with cancer should suffer needlessly from pain, nausea and other symptoms of their treatment as their doctors concentrate on treating their disease.

I met with [**MEMBER NAME**] and asked [**him/her**] to [**co-sponsor**] two bills currently introduced in Congress to protect cancer patients’ quality of life.

The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (H.R. 1339) would award grants to encourage training and continuing education for students and existing health professionals in the field of palliative care. The Patient Centered Quality of Life Act (H.R. 1666) would improve the experience of cancer patients and their families by better coordinating their care and addressing the often debilitating symptoms of treatment.

Through this commitment, [MEMBER NAME] can be a leader in supporting a health care delivery model that treats the person beyond the disease.

[NAME]

Volunteer, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)

[Hometown, state]

LTE #2

Supporting Patients' Quality of Life

As a cancer [survivor/patient/volunteer/caregiver], I've experienced first-hand how the mental and physical side effects of treatment can take a toll on one's quality of life. As health professionals focus on the cancer treatment itself, comfort and concerns such as pain, nausea, shortness of breath and anxiety are often times not addressed aggressively.

That's where palliative care can help - a growing field of specialized medical care that improves the quality of life of patients and their families from the point of diagnosis by focusing on symptoms of treatment for a serious disease such as cancer.

Last week I traveled to Washington, D.C. with hundreds of volunteers from across the country and had the opportunity to meet with [MEMBER NAME/S] to ask [him/her/them] to co-sponsor two federal bills currently pending that educate patients about palliative care, provide improved training for health care providers and support more comprehensive research on the benefits of palliative care.

I want to thank [MEMBER NAME/S] for adding [his/her] name to the growing list of lawmakers supporting patients' quality of life. Congress must take this opportunity to expand access to palliative care so patients and their families can have that extra layer of support when they need it most.

[NAME]

Volunteer, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)

[Hometown, state]