

Palliative Care At-A-Glance



What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care sees the person beyond the disease. It is a fundamental shift in health care delivery.

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stressors, with the goal of [improving quality of life for both the patient and the family](#). Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the patient's prognosis. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage of illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment – an 'added layer of support.'

Palliative Care Improves Quality and Cost-Effectiveness

[Numerous studies](#) have proven that specialty palliative care reduces pain and suffering. Symptom distress declines by 66% on average, and those improvements last months after initial consultation. With less symptom distress, patients avoid crisis utilization, resulting in shorter hospital lengths-of-stay, fewer intensive care unit stays, and reduced emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and readmissions from community settings.

A Valuable Part of the US Health Care System

In 2000, only 25% of hospitals with 50 or more beds reported operating a palliative care program; in just 15 years, that [proportion tripled](#), and now more than 91% of US patients are admitted to a hospital with a specialty palliative care service.

Patients and Families: Informed patients and caregivers have favorable views of palliative care, with more than two-thirds *strongly* agreeing that palliative care treatment should be [covered and available](#) to all patients in need.

Physicians: [Physicians too have very favorable views](#) of their palliative care colleagues, with more than 85% confirming a positive impact on the quality of care and the quality of life.


Leaders: These [favorable views are echoed by health system executives](#), with nearly all saying that palliative care boosts patient experience and quality of care, while 88% note improvements in clinician satisfaction and 79% in total cost of care.

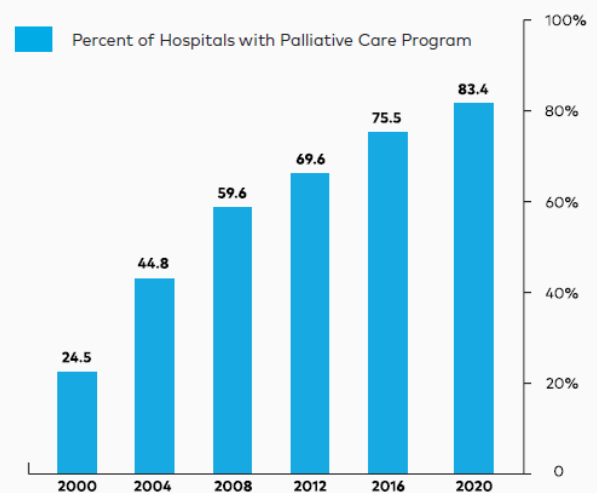
A Growing Need with a Growing Shortage

Roughly, [12% of the US adult population](#) is considered seriously ill, and that proportion will increase as the population ages. Unfortunately, the current pipeline of specially trained clinicians is [insufficient to meet this growing demand](#), with a greater number of palliative care physicians leaving the field than entering it in the coming years.

Policy Changes Would Help

The Patient Quality of Life Coalition has led an initiative to improve the lives of patients and families by making palliative care standard protocol during treatment of a serious illness. The **Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA)** establishes Palliative Care and Hospice Education Programs to improve the training of health professionals, establish a national campaign to inform patients, families and health professionals about the benefits of palliative care, and expand NIH funds to improve the delivery of palliative care to patients with serious illness.

 **Palliative Care Programs in U.S. Hospitals with 50 or more beds, 2000-2020***



Credit: Center to Advance Palliative Care