

Crucial Role of Palliative Psychologists in Advancing Holistic Healing and Serious End-Of-Life Illnesses

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Description

Palliative psychology is a specialized field within psychology that focuses on providing support and care to individuals facing life-threatening illnesses, and their families. It addresses the psychological, emotional, and spiritual aspects of suffering, aiming to enhance the quality of life for patients and their loved ones during challenging times. This multidimensional approach acknowledges the complex interplay between physical health and mental well-being, recognizing that both are integral components of comprehensive patient care. Palliative care is a holistic approach to healthcare that aims to improve the quality of life for individuals facing serious illnesses. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness, with the goal of enhancing comfort and supporting the patient's overall well-being. Palliative care can be introduced at any stage of the illness, not just at the end of life, and is often provided alongside curative treatments. Palliative psychology plays a crucial role in the palliative care team, contributing specialized knowledge and skills to address the psychological and emotional needs of patients and their families.

Palliative psychologists conduct thorough assessments of patients' psychological and emotional states, identifying factors such as anxiety, depression, and existential distress. Based on these assessments, they develop modified interventions to address the unique needs of each individual. Effective communication is central to palliative care, and psychologists play a key role in facilitating discussions about the patient's prognosis, treatment options, and end-of-life preferences. They offer emotional support to patients and their families, helping them navigate difficult decisions and manage with the challenges of serious illness. Palliative psychologists collaborate with patients to develop managing strategies that can enhance their resilience and improve their ability to manage stress. This may involve teaching relaxation techniques, mindfulness practices, or engaging in supportive counseling. Serious illness affects not only the patient but also their family members. Palliative psychologists work with families to address conflicts, improve communication, and provide a space for emotional expression. Understanding and addressing family dynamics is crucial for creating a supportive environment.

A lot of people with terminal illnesses asking philosophical and spiritual questions. Palliative psychologists provide support in exploring these concerns, helping patients find meaning and purpose in the face of mortality. They also recognize the interconnectedness of

physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of well-being. It emphasizes a holistic approach that addresses all dimensions of suffering. The preferences and values of the patient are central to palliative care, and palliative psychologists work collaboratively with patients to ensure their needs and desires are respected and incorporated into the care plan. Palliative psychologists are coordinated to the cultural backgrounds of patients and their families, recognizing the influence of cultural beliefs and practices on their experiences of illness, death, and grieving. Palliative care is inherently interdisciplinary, involving collaboration among healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, social workers, and psychologists. Palliative psychologists work closely with other team members to provide comprehensive care. Palliative care services, including psychological support, may be limited in some healthcare settings. Psychologists may face challenges in providing adequate services due to resource constraints.

Stigma related to mental health issues can persist even in palliative care settings. Patients and families may be hesitant to seek psychological support due to perceived stigma or a lack of understanding about the benefits of such care. In palliative care, there is often uncertainty about the course of the illness and the timing of the end of life. This uncertainty can pose challenges for both patients and psychologists in planning and providing appropriate support. Research in palliative psychology is advancing our understanding of how psychological factors impact the experience of serious illness and end-of-life care. Studies explore interventions to improve the psychological well-being of patients and their families, including the efficacy of psychotherapeutic approaches, the impact of supportive care on quality of life, and strategies for enhancing communication about end-of-life preferences.

Recent developments include the integration of technology to provide remote psychological support, expanding access to care for patients in rural or underserved areas. Additionally, the field is exploring the use of virtual reality and other innovative technologies to address psychological distress and enhance the overall palliative care experience. Palliative psychology is a vital component of comprehensive palliative care, addressing the psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of suffering in individuals facing life-threatening illnesses. By providing patient-centered, holistic support, palliative psychologists contribute to enhancing the quality of life for patients and their families during challenging times.