Hospice Aides: Help for Your Patient, Help for Your Team

By Hudson Valley Hospice Staff

One way for hospice and palliative care professionals to develop specialty skills and expertise is by becoming certified by the Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center (HPCC). HPCC offers specialty certification to nurses and other members of the interdisciplinary team including Home Health Aides (HHAs).

At Hudson Valley Hospice, we are fortunate to have a dedicated team of HHAs who have become certified as Hospice & Palliative Nursing Assistants (CHPNA). Through the certification process, our team ensures that our HHAs are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to assist our patients efficiently and effectively at home or in nursing homes.

Hospice HHAs provide hands-on care, support, and comfort to patients at the final stage of life. Aides receive training in palliative care techniques, pain and symptom management, communicating with patients and families, and care at the time of dying. In the nursing home, HHAs perform personal hygiene duties, including bathing, dressing, feeding, incontinence care, and oral care for patients. They ensure that patients are comfortable and spend time talking and listening during bedside visits.

The individualized care plan for hospice patients defines the patient’s needs and role of the HHA in the nursing home setting. The number of HHA hours is also defined in the care plan, which is developed by our Nurse Case Manager in conjunction with the hospice interdisciplinary team and nursing home team. HHAs document in the patient’s red hospice binder and provide feedback to the interdisciplinary team after each patient visit.

The effective collaboration between the Hospice Nurse Case Manager, HHA and the nursing home team is vital in ensuring the patient’s needs are met. Fostering healthy working relationships with nursing home staff benefits the patient and helps to provide much needed support during a time of overwhelming changes to the lives of patients and their families. It is incumbent on all of us to work together to provide authentic, compassionate and consistent care for all patients.
Hudson Valley Hospice News

July: Self-Awareness Month

Self-awareness is the ability to tune in to your feelings, thoughts and actions. Being self-aware also means being able to recognize how other people see you. Taking it a step further, social awareness can be defined as creating and maintaining positive connections with those around you, including friends, family, co-workers, supervisors...and even your hospice team!

Being self and socially aware while creating sincere connections and building healthy, nurturing, and supportive relationships has many benefits. When you maintain healthy relationships with others, you create a supportive environment that allows for learning, growth and connection. These relationships also cultivate trust and improve communication throughout your network, allowing for improved conflict management and emotional resilience. Plus, your comfort level and self-esteem improve and you develop healthy boundaries.

Let’s continue to work together to strengthen our social awareness as we provide care to our patients at the end of their lives.

Tips to build and strengthen your self-awareness

- Get involved in your community
- Volunteer
- Participate in town activities/trips
- Join group fitness classes
- Participate in social gatherings/events
- Form and maintain personal relationships

When to Call Hospice

- A patient was recently given a diagnosis of six months or less to live.
- If the patient experiences a change in status physically, emotionally, mentally or socially.
- If there is an increase or change in symptoms requiring a change to the plan of care.
- If the patient is transferred to the hospital setting. Hospice staff will assume care for the patient upon arriving to the ER. ER staff must be informed of Hospice status as we work very closely with hospitalists to ensure patients wishes are carried out.
- If the patient is transitioning or actively dying. Our goal is to send our team members to be at the bedside.
- When the patient dies.

Breaking Down the Myths

MYTH: Patients can’t go to the hospital while on hospice.

FACT: While the goal of hospice is for patients to be able to remain in their home, hospice has four levels of care. One of these levels provides for patients to be cared for in the hospital, if acute symptoms require around the clock care.

Quote of the Month

It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.

-Mahatma Gandhi