



# IN TOUCH

## Physician Newsletter

Comfort and dignity as life nears its end

SUMMER 2018

## DOCTORS SEEK EDUCATION ON END-OF-LIFE CARE

Arizona physicians view end-of-life counseling and care as vital, according to a statewide survey conducted this year.

“Most physicians support and want education on end-of-life care and advance care planning—for themselves and for the community,” said Dr. Gobi Paramanandam, director of Hospice of the Valley’s Arizona Palliative Home Care program. “Opportunities are available to enhance understanding. We want to encourage providers to become knowledgeable and comfortable with the discussion.”

The survey also showed that physicians desire more training on this topic. Barriers to having end-of-life conversations with patients include lack of patient/family readiness (50%) and doctors being pressed for time (9%).

Dr. Paramanandam serves on the Joint Arizona Medical Association/ Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association Physicians Task Force on End of Life Care, established in 2016 to assess physician knowledge and education on the issues. The task force conducted the statewide survey this year to gauge current attitudes and practices.

### More end-of-life survey results:

- Though Medicare now pays for end-of-life counseling, only 15% of responding physicians said they had filed a claim for reimbursement.
- The survey also showed that patients want a quality end-of-life experience—one where family is present, symptoms are controlled and their wishes are followed.
- Although palliative care has emerged as a medical specialty in the past decade, only 55% of respondents said they had referred seriously or terminally ill patients for care. About half cited “patient/family unreadiness” as the main barrier to referrals.



Gobi Paramanandam, MD, discusses advance directives with patient David Richards.

### Educational opportunities

Thoughtful Life Conversations is an affiliation of healthcare leaders, providers and community representatives with a commitment to improve end-of-life care for Arizonans. It is sponsored by the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association.

For educational opportunities for professionals and the public, view: [thoughtfullifeconversations.org](http://thoughtfullifeconversations.org).

Hospice of the Valley offers community assistance with advance care planning and no-cost living will and medical power of attorney documents. Contact our Health Care Decisions program at (602) 222-2229. To book a talk on healthcare directives: [emailspeakersbureau@hov.org](mailto:emailspeakersbureau@hov.org).



## OTHER SPECIALIZED SERVICES

### Transitional care

Transitional Care is provided as a bridge between acute hospitalizations and home for patients with chronic illnesses at high risk for readmission. The focus is on preventing re-hospitalization.

Services include MD/NP visits; nursing and social worker visits; telephone support; education; goals of care conversations (typically provided for 30 days).

### After hours call center

Staffed by on-duty nurses, our After Hours Call Center is open round-the-clock. Patients always reach a clinician—not an answering service. After Hours triage nurses are dispatched to patients' homes.

### Virtual visits

We offer telephonic and video technology for virtual visits with patients.

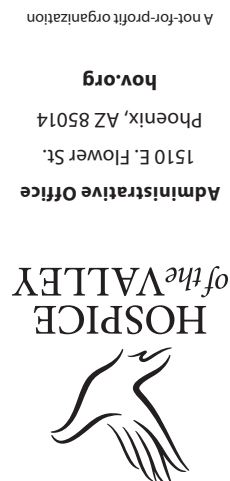
### Pulmonary resource team

Pulmonary nurses and respiratory therapists assist patients with pulmonary hypertension or fibrosis, COPD and ALS by teaching breathing techniques and ensuring equipment is effectively utilized.

### MediCaring

We are the only hospice in Arizona selected to participate in a national model Medicare program that offers both curative and hospice care at the same time.

To make a referral 24/7, call (602) 530-6920 or fax (602) 530-6905.



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