Objectives

- Understand community-based resources for end of life care
- Discuss the important provisions of the Medicare Hospice Benefit
- Demonstrate sensitivity to patients’ out of pocket expenses during end of life care
Which is a case for hospice?

- 45 year old woman with end-stage emphysema due to alpha-1 anti-trypsin deficiency
- 90 year old man with advanced dementia, who is non-verbal and bed-bound
- 60 year old woman with metastatic pancreatic cancer
Which is a case for hospice?

All three patients would benefit from hospice.
What is Hospice?

“Hospice is a “program that uses an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals to provide comprehensive palliative care for terminally ill patients.”

(UNIPAC One: The Hospice/Palliative Medicine Approach to End-of-Life Care)
What is Hospice?

- Hospice programs are agencies that provide interdisciplinary care for patients at home and other residential settings (e.g. nursing home)
- Inpatient Hospice (e.g. San Diego Hospice)
- Medicare Hospice Benefit
Hospice: A Model of Interdisciplinary Care

- Physician services
- Nursing care
- Health aide and homemaker services
- Physical and occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Social worker services
- Dietary counseling
Benefits of Hospice

- Symptom management
- Assistance with activities of daily living
- Psychosocial support
- Bereavement services
Medicare Hospice Benefit

- Covered by Medicare Part A
- Prognosis of six months or less
- Interdisciplinary team – nurse, therapists, social worker, chaplain, aides
- Durable medical equipment, supplies & medications related to the terminal diagnosis
What the Medicare Hospice Benefit does NOT cover

- Room & board at a skilled nursing facility
- Skilled nursing care
- Medications not related to the terminal illness
Medicare Hospice Benefit: What is the benefit period?

- 2 consecutive 90-day coverage periods followed by an unlimited number of 60-day coverage periods
- Patients may terminate their enrollment during a hospice period & return to their regular Medicare Part A coverage
- Patients may re-enroll in the Medicare Hospice Benefit at any time as long as they meet the eligibility criteria
Difficult Choices

88 year old man with CAD, DM, severe PVD with five gangrenous toes and advanced dementia. Bed bound.

He has a stage IV sacral pressure ulcer and is now transferred to a local nursing home for care.

To hospice or not to hospice?
Barriers to Hospice in the Nursing Home

- Determining prognosis & eligibility for the Medicare Hospice Benefit (under Part A)
- Unavailable to patients receiving Medicare Skilled Nursing Benefit (under Part A)
- Lack of experience by staff & physicians
- Focus on providing rehabilitation and long term care
Barriers to Hospice in the Nursing Home

- Minimum Data Set – Quality Indicators
- Reimbursement
- Staff turnover
- Role competition & confusion
- Turf battles
Billing Medicare for Care of Patients on Hospice

- **Attending physician:**
  - If employed by the hospice agency, then the hospice bills Medicare Part A
  - If NOT employed by the hospice agency, the MD
    - Bills Medicare Part B
    - Uses the “GV modifier” (if services provided are related to the terminal diagnosis)
    - Uses the “GW modifier” (if service provided are not related to hospice patient’s terminal condition)
Discussing Hospice

- Establish the setting
- What does the patient understand?
- What does the patient expect?
- Discuss hospice care
- Respond to emotions
- Establish a plan

(from Fast Facts and Concepts #38 – End of Life Education Project)
The Dilemma

- Cure is the goal

- Death is perceived as failure

- Prognosis is hard to determine

- Cure cannot always be achieved

- Death is an inevitable, natural part of life

- Disease progression usually follows a common course
Conclusion

- Hospice care is a valuable resource for patients nearing the end of life
- Consider hospice for patients with advanced cancer as well as non-cancer diagnoses
- Don’t wait to refer – too often patients are referred in the last days or weeks of life
References


References


- [http://www.capc.org/](http://www.capc.org/) (useful resources)


- [http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/02154.pdf](http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/02154.pdf) (Medicare Hospice Benefit booklet in PDF)