

Compassionate Care Hospice is a comprehensive, palliative care program designed to support and attend to patients in difficult-to-serve populations suffering from chronic, terminal illnesses. The Hospice team members strive to enhance the quality of life for the patients as well as their families during this difficult time, and provide long-term support for friends and family members throughout the bereavement period. The team consists of physicians, pharmacists, social workers, nurses, therapists, aides, and volunteers, and everyone works with patients and their families to help meet all desires and needs. Compassionate Care Hospice embodies a drug-free workplace, practices non-discrimination, enforces standards of conduct and ethical behavior, investigates instances of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, properly disposes of medical waste, and advises patients on possible barriers to treatment and methods to overcome these barriers.

Hospice aides practice numerous responsibilities that improve the patients' overall quality of care. Such responsibilities include: bathing, nail care, repositioning, assistance with walking, laundry, grocery shopping, and any other nurse-specified activity. There are also several duties that Hospice aides are not responsible for, such as: administration of medication, deep cleaning or moving of furniture, and general housework. Additionally, Hospice team members cannot accept financial benefits from patients and families, and cannot handle any financial transactions. In order to practice ethical behavior and respect for the patient, is extremely important that Hospice employees maintain every patient's privacy in an accurate and professional manner. In addition to the physical requirements performed by employees, providing long-term emotional support is extremely important in improving overall quality of life.

Members of the Hospice team are also responsible for providing companionship for patients during this difficult period of life. A large majority of patients do not have living relatives or friends, and when someone is nearing the end of their life, it is important that they

maintain recurring contact to improve their quality of life. Over two years ago, my grandfather became extremely ill and required in-home Hospice care. Although he did have various friends, family, and even military personnel visit him during his final months, the work of the Hospice employees left a positive impact on both my grandfather and our family. The nurses were compassionate and respectful, and embodied all of the positive qualities demonstrated by the Hospice community in Athens.

In terms of benefits, Hospice care is reimbursed by several private insurance companies, along with HMO's, PPO's, Medicaid, Medicare, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield. If a patient is receiving Medicare Part A, they are also eligible to receive Hospice Medicare Benefits in addition to the provided Medicare benefits. There are four main categories of care offered under the Hospice Benefits, including routine home care, general inpatient care, respite care, and continuous care. Compassionate Care Hospice also offers advice and general information to patients and their families surrounding advance directives and the types available. In addition, patients are provided with several rights regarding their health information, which include the right to request restrictions, to receive confidential communications, to inspect and copy personal health information, to amend healthcare information, and to request an accounting. Overall, Compassionate Care Hospice strives to improve the quality of life of patients and their families through the utilization of emotional, professional, and medical support during the final stages of life.

Throughout my volunteer experience at Compassionate Care Hospice, I primarily worked with Cris Taylor and Karen Hall in the office located off of Prince Ave. The first major task I was challenged with was creating a bulletin board for Karen to hang in her office. This bulletin board would become a "fun and cute" (Karen) place for employees to post job opportunities and

important announcements and reminders. I took on this job because I am creative and enjoy doing projects and artwork, but it proved to be more difficult than I originally planned. Since I am a perfectionist, I like to have a good color scheme with matching designs and decorations, so it took longer than expected to choose the best materials. After a week of working on the bulletin board, I was finished and satisfied, with my final product consisting of motivational sayings, flowers, and decorative clipboards. I enjoyed this project because it allowed me to physically contribute to the office and provide a place for employees and guests to discover new opportunities.

The second major task I worked on at Hospice was wrapping ribbons around boxes of cookies and bags of popcorn that will be delivered out in the community and to Hospice patients and their families. Although the project was tedious, I enjoyed getting into the holiday spirit and the giving nature of the season. It is essential that the community feel remembered, important, and supported by the Hospice team members, and by helping prepare these gifts to be delivered, I felt as though I was contributing to this support. Additionally, since I did not have any direct contact hours with patients, this project allowed me to feel as if I was spreading joy and compassion to patients, their families, and the community. When people are in their final stages of life, it is often difficult to find happiness, excitement, and companionship in day-to-day activities. By sending these gifts out to the Hospice community, I helped the patients and their families to share a smile and experience the feeling of being loved and supported by the Hospice community.

The third major task I began yet sadly did not have the opportunity to finish, was creating folders for Hillary, the Hospice Nurse Practitioner, containing necessary information for new cardiac Hospice patients. Hillary emphasized that this project was very important, since the

packets reflect Hospice as a whole organization and help establish credibility. Creating those packets required patience and organization, because the papers were to be placed in a specific order with specific labels and dividers. Additionally, I was lucky enough to receive help from a fellow classmate, which led to the formation of a new friendship and provided me with someone to discuss the Hospice experience with. This project also made me feel as if I was positively impacting the Hospice community, because I was responsible for gathering the first information that new patients see after beginning the Hospice process. Helping the employees to arrange and prepare information for patients allowed me to utilize my organizational and creative skills, while indirectly contributing to the patients and families served by the Hospice community.

In addition to the three major tasks listed above, I also worked with Karen to organize various types of employee files and invoices. Prior to this experience, I had never worked in an office where paperwork was a responsibility. Surprisingly, I enjoyed organizing, sorting, and filing; it was an overall calming and satisfactory process. I was also excited to take on this project because I knew it would help Karen and the other employees to stay organized and have quick and easy access to the files. Although I was unable to have any direct contact hours with the Hospice patients, I greatly enjoyed working in the office with Cris, Karen, Hillary, and the other employees, and the work I completed taught me patience, organization, creativity, and compassion.

Volunteering at Compassionate Care Hospice this semester has positively influenced my mindset surrounding possible future careers. The current plan I have for after graduation is to attend nursing school to become an RN, and eventually return to school to become a Nurse Practitioner. Until this point in my life, I was unsure of the specific field that I desire to work in; however, spending time at Compassionate Care Hospice has aided in my decision to work with

undeserving populations. Hospice works with the terminally ill patients and their families that other medical facilities and organizations would not typically provide palliative care for, and I desire to work with similar populations, possibly in other countries such as Africa or Central America. In the past, I traveled to the under-developed areas of Costa Rica on a mission trip to build a church community center and deliver decorated bags containing rice, beans, toothpaste and toothbrushes, children's clothes, and other essential items. Being in that environment had a major impact on how I viewed happiness and its connection to worldly possessions, and even though I was not providing medical assistance, it was evident that it was greatly needed. This experience in Costa Rica along with my time spent at Compassionate Care Hospice opened my eyes to my newfound, personal desire to devote my life and career to providing both medical support and companionship to those in undeserving, in-need populations.

The environment created by the Hospice employees is one that embodies positivity, encouragement, and compassion, with every team member completely devoting themselves to truly improving the patients' quality of life during their final time before death. Having this responsibility requires patience, kindness, and the overall consideration of others' needs before your own, and the members of the Hospice team supersede all expectations. Although I was unable to speak with patients directly, the work I completed in the office allowed me to truly contribute to the organization through my dedication and passion for helping others. Not only did I leave an impact on the Hospice community, the Hospice community left an enormous impact on me, by influencing my desires to pursue a future life and career devoted to serving those in undeserving populations.