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Your loved one is failing and someone tells you set up...HOSPICE

Just hearing the word can trigger all kinds of emotions, especially fear. Hospice means different things to different people...for some its help, support and not being alone; for others, it's that everyone has given up, including your loved one. To make the hospice experience a positive one, you need to understand what it means, what you can expect from it and how it helps your loved one



when the cycle of life is nearing an end. Here are some things you'll want to know:

**Who sets up hospice for you?**

There are several ways you can access hospice. You can look through the phone book or another resource book or you can call a Professional Elder Care Manager, like me and I'll set it all up for you, including home medical equipment and supplemental caregiver services, should you need that as well.

**Who pays for it?**

If you are Medicare qualified, most hospice services are covered under that benefit. This means the nurses, caregivers, social workers and chaplain services are paid for by Medicare. Certain equipment and supplies that you

will need in the home are also covered. These might include a hospital bed, over-bed table, gloves, oxygen, wound care supplies, and certain medications. There may be some out-of-pocket costs but these should be minimal.

**What happens when hospice begins?**

Either a social worker or nurse will make an appointment to meet with you and your loved one. They will ask you questions so they can determine your needs and wishes. They will evaluate your loved ones status and needs and confer with the physician so that the appropriate medications and equipment can be made available. They will gather baseline data, such as blood pressure, temperature, etc. so they can track what's happening.

**How long can one remain on hospice and does it hasten death?**

A doctor must certify that he/she feels that the hospice patient will not live longer than 6 months. Should the patient live beyond 6 months, the doctor will re-certify them for another 6 months. The hospice nurse will neither prolong the life

of someone who is suffering, nor will they hasten their death. I know of many that enter the hospice program and die within a few hours, days or weeks. I've seen others that have lived beyond 2 years, some where hospice was started and by some miracle the patient rebounded and hospice services were discontinued.

**Once initiated, what should you expect from your hospice provider?**

At a minimum, you should expect a shoulder to lean on, a kind and sympathetic hand to help you through this trying time. You should expect that all your questions about the dying process and what you are seeing will be answered. You should expect that if you need a nurse anytime day or night, one will be there for you. You can and should expect that they will keep your loved one safe and comfortable, as free from pain as possible without snowing them. You should expect that when your loved one passes, a nurse will be there for you and handle all the necessary things that need taking care of.

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WE ARE YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Our team will provide you and your family with peace of mind.

## HOSPICE, continued

**Why do our loved ones linger on?** Everyone is different. For some, being able to die in their own home gives them a peace of mind. Some will fight to the end to draw every last breath they can. Some suddenly become more spiritual and place their last days on earth in Gods hands. Some hang on until they see that one person who they need to make amends with or just to see them once more.

**The dying process, what will I see happening?**

I don't mean to be morose here. It often depends on what has caused your loved ones health to fail; cancer, heart disease, lung problems, there are so many medical problems that eventually cause our demise. You need to prepare yourself for the fact that dying is not pretty and it can be scary for you as well as your loved one. You may see them in pain and that will make you hurt as well. Toward the end, you may see them breathe with their mouth open so the oxygen they are receiving seems useless. You may stand there and wait for them to take their next breath or final breath. Their urine output may stop or become very dark and minimal. If you know



that these are the normalcy of dying, you will be better prepared and less scared.

**When should you initiate hospice?**

Don't wait too long. If your loved one is failing and the doctor says there's no more that can be done, talk to a professional about hospice services. Together you can decide if the timing is right or should you wait. It doesn't have to mean that you are giving up or that you are relinquishing your duties. It can mean that you and your loved one will feel the love and support of professionals that are readily available to help you, and that you'll both be much more comfortable and more at ease. It can help bring you both peace of mind.



### Veterans Health Care Benefits

You do not have to have service-related disabilities to qualify and benefits are retro-active to date of application. To start the application process, contact:

**Veterans Benefits Administration  
5400 W. National Ave.  
Milwaukee WI 53214  
(414) 902-5671**

If you have problems getting through the process, call Robert (Prestige) at (414) 801-4835 and I'll see what I can do to help you.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF OUR NEWSLETTER

The author of our articles is Robert Griesemer, a Professional Geriatric Care Manager who owns Prestige Home Health Care, with an office in Elm Grove. Mr. Griesemer holds a Bachelors Degree in Science, as well as a Masters Degree in Health Services. As a Professional Registered Nurse, Senior Advisor, and Professional Geriatric Care Manger, Mr. Griesemer works closely with physicians and other health care professionals to enhance the well being of the elderly. Robert advocates and brings about positive changes and a better quality of life for those under his care. Mr. Griesemer can be reached at 414-801-4835.

## Jack's Story

Jack was 95 years old when I met him. He was a sweet man with a lot of charm and character and even at that age he had such a zest for life. Jack loved to have friends drop by or go to lunch at his club, always a joyful greeting and kind word for everyone he met. It was so sad to see Jacks health deteriorate over the next 3 years that we cared for him, his memory became clouded, confusion set in, his ability to walk and take care of himself diminished and his outings gradually came to a stop. Still Jack was always quick to laugh and warm your heart with his Irish smile. As Jacks Care Manager, I initiated several changes in his life. I set him up with a new doctor, one who enjoyed seeing him, took the time to listen and went out of her way to resolve any concerns we had. Next I commandeered a friend of his to be his Health Care Power of Attorney as Jack had no immediate or close relatives to look out for his best interests. Then, through the services of a Personal Trust Bank Officer, Jack's finances were better managed and even as the glimmer in Jack's eyes faded, he was content knowing he could stay in his own home and live out his life there as well. Three years after I met Jack, he succumbed to a major infection and the end was eminent. I set up in-home hospice so that Jack could rest comfortably in his own home, surrounded by friends and his caregiver family. A day before he passed, he woke up and wanted mashed potatoes and gravy. He ate them and lapsed back into a coma from which he never awoke. Jacks been gone a few years now but we think of him often and we miss him. That's what being a Care Manager is all about.