

# High-Quality Hospice Care: Assessing the Options

A Journal of the American Medical Association article provides information for physicians detailing when to refer patients to hospice and how to evaluate different hospice programs. Because "there is variation in the delivery of these services and in the quality of care," doctors are encouraged to look for the "three C's." In other words, a quality hospice program should include:

**Competent care** provided by an interdisciplinary staff with medical, social work, spiritual, volunteer and bereavement services.

**Coordination of patient care** including close communication with primary care physicians.

**Compassionate care** that treats all patients and families respectfully and compassionately.

*'Referring a Patient and Family to High-Quality Palliative care at the Close of Life'  
Journal of the American Medical Association  
February 11, 2009 Volume 201, No. 6 2009*

## Finding a Quality Hospice Program:

### Questions to Ask

Does the hospice have

- a team of professionals providing medical, nursing, social work, volunteer, bereavement, and spiritual care?
- the ability to reach a staff person 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?
- care provided to patients in their homes, at nursing homes, and in assisted living facilities?
- a dedicated, inpatient, acute care hospice facility?
- a medical director?
- close collaborations with patients' doctors?
- tools in place to serve non-English speaking patients and families?
- professional counselors who provide grief support and education to patients and families?
- medical staff with specialized hospice certifications?

Is the hospice accredited by The Joint Commission? Is the hospice Medicare certified?

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patients and their families**

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