Palliative care provides comprehensive services to help patients live more comfortably and productively with chronic illnesses, and can be used for years with many chronic illnesses and conditions.
What is palliative care?

Palliative care improves the quality of life in patients facing life-threatening illnesses, as well as their families. This is achieved through the prevention and relief of pain, other distressing symptoms, and worries.

This specialized type of care:

- Integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care
- Offers a support system to help patients and their families cope during difficult times, including bereavement counselling, if requested
- Uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and their families
- Enhances quality of life, and aims to have a positive influence on the illness
- Can be used early in the course of illness in conjunction with other therapies that are intended to prolong life, such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy

At United Regional, the Palliative Care team consists of chaplains, social workers, case managers, nurses, advanced practice providers and physicians. When necessary, we also utilize resources from pharmacy, physical therapy, and nutritional services. The team works hand-in-hand with the patient’s other doctors to provide an extra layer of support and comfort for the patient.
Who can receive palliative care?

Anyone diagnosed with a life-limiting or life-threatening illness or condition can receive a palliative care referral.

Patients typically referred to the program have chronic, long-term illnesses that require recurrent hospitalizations and ongoing follow-up, such as patients living with cancer, heart disease, lung disease, kidney failure, AIDS, liver disease or cystic fibrosis, among others.

While a referral to palliative care can be made at any time, it is best for the patient, family and health care team to access the program as early in the treatment process as possible.

How does palliative care differ from hospice care?

Both palliative care and hospice care programs strive to relieve symptoms and improve the patient’s quality of life, but they have distinct differences.

Hospice care is a philosophy of care for the terminally ill and provides guidance and support to their families and loved ones. It focuses on a patient’s last months of life, when there is no curative treatment for the illness available or the patient chooses to no longer receive curative treatment.

Palliative care is available even when a person has been recently diagnosed with a serious life-altering illness and is actively receiving curative treatment. It provides comprehensive services to help the patient live more comfortably and productively with the chronic illness, and can be used for years with many chronic illnesses and conditions.

What are the benefits of palliative care?

The team at United Regional provides our patients and their families:

- Devoted time for intensive family meetings and patient/family counseling
- Expert advice in managing complex physical and emotional symptoms, in coordination with the health care team
- Communication and support on care, disease progression and decision-based conversations
- Coordination of care of many types, including in the hospital and post-acute care settings
- Providing support during difficult discussions, transitions in care, and end-of-life issues
Helping transition care for the patient

When it is time to leave the hospital, the Palliative Care Team and social workers help patients make a successful move to other health care settings or to a home by coordinating care and providing ongoing follow-up. They recommend additional community resources based on the patient’s needs.

It is important for patients and their families to have an improved awareness of chronic conditions and their normal progression. With a clearer understanding, patients can discuss other options and alternatives with their physicians and family members to determine what is important to them and exactly the care the patient wants and the setting in which they want to receive it.

Some patients prefer to spend less time in critical care settings and more time at home. Others would rather go to the emergency room and receive acute care services when their illnesses progress naturally. There is no right or wrong way to navigate these life changes, but it is important that the health care team understands the patient’s desires.
To find more information about United Regional’s Palliative Care Program, or to make a referral, please call (940) 764-4248.

Our Passion
To provide excellence in health care for the communities we serve.

Our Purpose
To make a positive difference in the lives of others.