

Palliative Care services having an impact in Southwest

The program, focusing on personalized support, has already achieved success less than five years in

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The Palliative Care Program in the Cypress Health Region continues to provide personalized information support and services to individuals and families requiring Palliative Care, aiming to help individuals live every day to the fullest.

While the Palliative Care Program has been in place less than five years, they are achieving success through their interdisciplinary team approach, focusing on providing services families and individuals need during their final months, weeks or days of life.

Deb Sekerak, Palliative Care Coordinator for the Cypress Health Region, suggests there is no single

method of Palliative Care. As the coordinator and case manager for the program, she and her team assesses each case and bringing forward recommendations and ideas.

"We like to look at not only a person's needs, but their wants and desires as well," Sekerak said.

She plays an important role in the Palliative Care network, guiding individuals and families through a part of the healthcare system unfamiliar to many people.

"We help the patient and family navigate the whole system, and the outcome is less frustration for all concerned. I'm always honored and privileged to walk their journey with them assisting in any way we can."

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Deb Sekerak, Palliative Care Coordinator for the Cypress Health Region

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The Cypress Health Region's Palliative Care Program strives to help families make informed choices and help them access the proper resources once their disease is progressive and no longer curable.

"Palliative Care comes into effect when people are diagnosed with a terminal illness and there's no more curative treatment," she explained. "They're not looking at getting better, it's more about care up to and including end of life."

A Palliative Care team is able to help individuals stay in their homes as long as possible during this time of their lives.

Family Physicians are the key team members, but the team includes many other professionals. Occupational Therapists aid in providing the proper equipment for use in the family

homes. Dietitians are available for individuals ensuring proper nutritional needs are met. A Psychiatric Home Care Nurse can assist with grieving and dealing with emotions during Palliative Care. Pharmacists, Social Workers, Special Care Aides and Nurses are also key members of the team.

The program also benefits from a series of palliative volunteers, with access to trained volunteers in Swift Current plus Shaunavon and area.

"They go into the homes and give relief to the caregiver, they may run some errands, do friendly visiting or maybe just provide a quiet presence. This can be a huge help if family live far away," Sekerak explained.

Spiritual Care workers are also an option for individuals who may want to talk about their fears and

concerns. The Cypress Regional Hospital has a Chaplain available for those not affiliated with a religious denomination.

"It's a very vulnerable time," she admits. "We try to help them throughout the whole experience, not only the physical pain and symptoms, but the spiritual care as well."

Sekerak knows that every case is different, so personalizing their services and care is the priority.

"Palliative Care isn't really a place, it's a philosophy of care," she said. "Palliative Care can be provided at home, in a personal care home, long-term care facility, or even in the hospital. Palliative Care can be done anywhere"

"However if a person chooses to stay in their home for end of life care then our goal is to facilitate and honor that request."