

Hospices

Old idea takes new form

What is a hospice? How has the idea of such care evolved, and how does it differ from other medical facilities?

Lee Pipa, a member of the group organizing Hospice Support Services Inc., offered background and explanation. She noted that hospices in their earliest form were havens operated by European monks, way stations for travelers during the Middle Ages.

Used often by weary travelers to the Holy Land during the Crusades, they came to be known as places where the poor could go. Eventually they came to be refuges for the very ill and the dying.

The idea of hospice as a place for the terminally ill was first advanced in this century, Mrs. Pipa said, by Dr. Cecily Saunders, who was director of St. Christopher Hospice in London. It is to this institution that the hospice movement in the United States has looked for direction.

That hospice, it was noted by Mrs. Pipa, puts emphasis on "preventing pain and blunting symptoms of terminal cancer in an organized program of care for people going through life's last station."

LAST YEAR Hospice of Southeast Michigan was established in Southfield. Operated like a hospital with regard to admissions, insurance and rates, it has just 42 beds and offers care, comfort and support rather than treatment to cure.

Its patients come from all over the metropolitan area, but their numbers are limited by the institution's capacity.

The spokeswoman for the volunteer hospice group being organized here said hospice care "differs from the traditional hospital care in that it focuses on the quality of survival rather than the length of survival."

"The program is intended," she added, "to serve people with cancer or other types of illness who have received the maximum treatment available, for whom no other therapy is being given and for whom there remains an unfavorable prognosis."

"Hospice care seeks to ease the pain and treat the symptoms of patients, enabling them to spend as much time as possible at home, in comfort, with a clear mind and surrounded by the love of family and friends."

THERE IS ANOTHER side to hospice care, she added. "It extends its scope to help the family cope with the patient's illness and death." Bereavement counseling is given as long as necessary as part of the program.

"A hospice system," she concluded, "provides supportive care for terminally ill patients and their families, either directly or on a consulting basis with the patient's physician or another community agency such as Visiting Nurses Association."

Short of breath? See your doctor

Dear Joe:

Lately I have had a problem with being short of breath. I notice it mostly after I climb one flight of stairs. When I get to the top, I have to sit down and rest. I used to enjoy going for long walks, but now I have to stop and rest often so I can catch my breath. Is this just part of growing older? I am 71.

Shortness of breath (dyspnea) is not considered part of the normal process of aging. Some shortness of breath after vigorous exercise is expected. But in your case, shortness of breath after climbing just one flight of stairs implies that medical attention is necessary. So please make an appointment with your doctor soon and have this condition checked out.

Dear Joe:

My husband and I both have a yearly medical checkup. Something has been upsetting me for the past few years. My husband refuses to have that part of the examination that includes the rectal exam. He says that it is not nec-



gerontology
A. Jolayne
Farrell

essary and refuses to discuss the matter any further. We can't discuss this subject at all. Could I have your comments on this please?

First of all, it is commendable that you both have a yearly physical exam. You are right, a rectal exam is very necessary for both men and women. During the male rectal exam, the doctor is examining the anal canal and the prostate gland. Cancer of the prostate is the most common malignant disease in men over age 50.

Early cancer of the prostate most often does not have any symptoms for the patient to report to the doctor, and enlargement can be detected through

the rectal exam. The procedure does not take very long. I hope your husband reads this and will reconsider his views on this preventive procedure.

Dear Joe:

I have a sense of freedom in my old age. I am very comfortable in being 84 years young!

The best advice that I could give your readers of any age is to have friends of all ages throughout ones life. I started this as a young child when my first and best friend was my grandmother. Through the years, I never let a person's age determine whether or not I would be his or her friend.

So many people my age complain that they are lonely and that most of their friends are no longer living. Yes, a lot of my friends are dead, but so many are living, and I am enjoying them so.

I hope you print my letter.

Jolayne Farrell

Dear Josie:

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