Palliative Care is a new subspecialty that has emerged in the past decade focusing on

1. Improvement of quality of life
2. Providing comfort
3. Providing care by a team.

Definition of Palliative Care- The total care of the patient and family with resolution of any suffering when there is no longer a cure for the patient and the illness now will reduce the life expectancy of the patient.

The changing face of medicine and change in the culture of medicine has brought about the development of the new subspecialty. This is a result of the new corporate changes in medicine, loss of patient advocates in our health care teams, physician concerns, a de-emphasis on the patient as a person, communication breakdown between hospital and office practice.

Myths in Palliative Care:

1. Same as Hospice
2. Palliative care is not real medicine
3. A choice between either palliative care or hospice
4. Palliative care is expensive

Joint Commission News Release on February 27, 2012

Palliative Care is the field of medicine designed to improve the quality of life for patients and their families by relieving the pain, symptoms and stress of a serious illness that is not dependent on prognosis.

The Joint Commission developed advance palliative care certification standards:

1. A formal, organized palliative care program led by an interdisciplinary team whose members possess the requisite expertise in palliative care
2. Leadership endorsement and support of the program’s goals for providing care, treatment and services.
3. A special focus on patient and family engagement
4. Processes which support the coordination of care and communication among all care settings and providers
5. The use of evidence-based national guidelines or expert consensus to guide patient care

Palliative care impacts the quality of life and is patient and family centered.

Palliative care focuses on improving quality of life and providing comfort to people of all ages with serious chronic diseases.

Palliative Care is effective:

1. Improves quality of life
2. Supports family and relationships
3. Extends life
4. Helps family and caregivers navigate the healthcare system and is a strong patient and family advocate
5. Gives guidance with difficult decisions when struggling with goals

It provides patient education to promote realistic goals in

1. Ventilator treatment
2. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
3. Dialysis
4. Treatment of infections
5. Medications
6. Artificial nutrition and hydration
7. Guidance when a patient and health care team are at odds regarding treatment goals