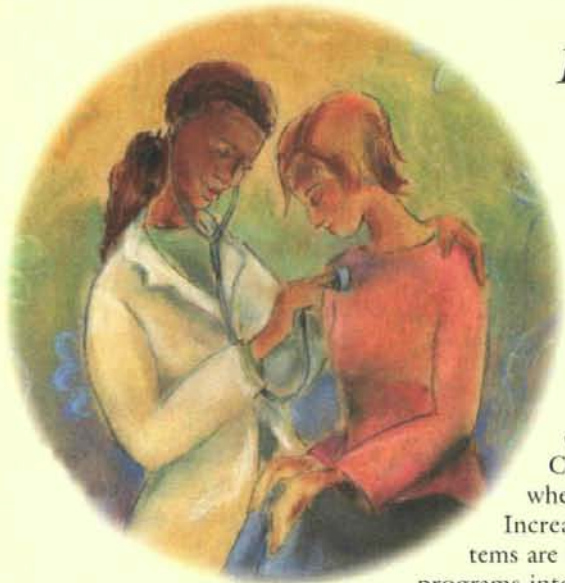


PALLIATIVE CARE ENTERS THE MAINSTREAM

*For Everything
There Is a Season*



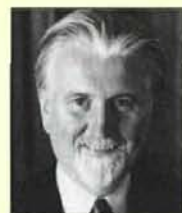
As this issue of *Health Progress* went to press, the National Consensus Project, a consortium of five palliative care organizations, published *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care*.^{*} This special section on palliative care is reaching the Catholic health care ministry at a time when palliative care has come into its own. Increasingly, hospitals and health care systems are integrating palliative care practices and programs into their strategies for achieving clinical excellence. We finally have a reasonably well-defined understanding of palliative care and what it implies:

The goal of palliative care is to relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for patients with advanced chronic and life-threatening illnesses and their families. It focuses on treating pain, symptoms and stress, providing support for daily living, helping patients and families make difficult medical decisions and ensuring that patient and family wishes for care are followed (National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care, *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care*, Brooklyn, NY, 2004).

This special section addresses central features of palliative care, moving from the more theoretical, systemic considerations to the most intimate, personal dimensions of giving and receiving care in the face of chronic and life-threatening illnesses. This set of articles is designed to serve as a wide-open window on the world of emerging patterns in palliative care. Our expert panel of researchers and clinicians has laid out some important advances and shared the growing promise of an area of health care that typifies the essence of our faith-based ministry: making visible the invisible love of God.

Palliative care creates an environment wherein each person can touch the heart of those who are in pain, alleviating physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering while opening paths of peaceful resolution and hope. Palliative care is a ministry whose time has come.

^{*}The participating organizations are the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Glenview, IL; the Center to Advance Palliative Care, New York City; the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association, Pittsburgh; Last Acts Partnership, Brooklyn, NY; and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, Alexandria, VA.



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