Palliative care reaching more inpatients with serious illness

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(HealthDay)—Inpatient palliative care teams are reaching a broader mix of patients earlier in the course of their illness, according to a study published online Dec. 6 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Laura A. Schoenherr, M.D., from the University of California in San Francisco, and colleagues used data from the Palliative Care Quality Network (2013 through 2017) to assess current practice and trends among patients cared for and outcomes achieved by inpatient specialty palliative care services in the United States.

The researchers identified 135,197 patients referred to inpatient palliative care (51.0 percent female; mean age, 71.3 years). Cancer was the most common primary diagnosis (32.0 percent), but rates decreased over the study period (odds ratio [OR], 0.84). Pain and other symptoms were common but improved significantly during the consultation period. More than three-quarters of patients were discharged alive (78.7 percent), a number that increased over time (OR, 1.36). Rates of discharge referral to clinic-based (OR, 4.00) and home-based (OR, 2.63) palliative care increased significantly over the study period, whereas hospice referrals decreased (OR, 0.56).

"These trends suggest that inpatient palliative care teams are reaching a broader group of patients with serious illness and are seeing them earlier in their illnesses, consistent with emerging data and guidelines," the authors write.

More information: Abstract/Full Text

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