



Hospice with Heart

Quarterly Newsletter

April 2007

We're Only Human

One year ago the media and the nation were focused on Terri Schiavo as her loved one endured a very personal situation in a very public arena. As a result, many people found themselves confronting the inevitable: One day all of us will die.

Americans are not comfortable talking about death, let alone planning for it. In fact, most families spend more time planning for their annual summer vacation than they do for a medical emergency. Terri Schiavo changed that for many people.

There is a valuable lesson to be learned from the family crisis that the world watched last year. A lesson rooted in the pain that the Schiavos and Schindlers experienced in the spotlight of the media. Terri's situation taught us the importance of making our wishes known to our loved ones, health care providers, clergy and all those we care about and who care about us.

There is something people can do to make sure they avoid the tragic conflict that played out in Florida last year: Plan for what you would want at the end of your life.

Planning is important whether you want every medical intervention available up until the moment you die or if you want to spend your final days at home, surrounded by

family, focusing on comfort care and quality of life. What matters is that you make your wishes known by completing an advance directive and talking about it with your loved ones. You have choices and an advance directive is an important step in making sure your wishes are honored.

An advance directive is also a gift to those you love. Should your spouse, sibling, parent or child ever find themselves in the position to make medical choices for you because you can't speak for yourself, you've let them know what's most important to you.

In the past year, more than 1.5 million advance directive forms have been downloaded from www.caringinfo.org, the Web site for Caring Connections. This is a free resource from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization offering materials about care at the end of life. Caring Connection's HelpLine, 800/658-8898, has answered more than 50,000 calls and 12,000 e-mails from people wanting to learn more.

If you were one of those thousands who called, e-mailed or downloaded information about advance directives, that's wonderful. But you must do more than request the form...do more than complete the form...do more than give the form to

your physician, family and friends: Use the form to help you talk to people about these issues and your wishes for the end of your life.

NHPCO encourages all Americans to wear a white ribbon starting in March, and especially on March 31 (the anniversary of Terri Schiavo's death), as a reminder to all people that every one of us should take the time to think about our wishes, and plan for them. Should people ask about the meaning of the white ribbon, tell them to plan for the end of life, because we are only human.

Planning for the inevitable is about how you, your family, friends, neighbors and all of us LIVE. Don't let death just happen to you—live every day with the dignity, grace and confidence that comes with making your wishes known.

Caring Connections provides free advance care planning documents and educational resources (800/658-8898 or www.caringinfo.org) as part of the "It's about how you LIVE" campaign to improve end-of-life care. Support for this program is provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Princeton, New Jersey.

We always encourage you to contact our office at (712) 325-6802 with any questions. Any of our staff members are always happy to help you in any way they can.

Hospice with Heart Welcomes Our New Social Worker

Leslie Halligan, BSW joined our team in March. She has been a great asset to our hospice family. We asked her to say a little something about herself and this is what she had to say:

I would like to take this time to introduce myself to you. My name is Leslie and I am the new social worker for Hospice with Heart. I think that spring is such a wonderful time to be embarking on this new journey together as it symbolizes the new life and growth around us. I believe that Anne Bradstreet said it best when she said, "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome." It is only when we have faced the hard times, that we can really appreciate the good times. I look forward to working with you and your loved ones through all of life's seasons.

In the spring of life, in the flower of youth, Everything is bright and new.

In the summer of life, Time of growth and change, Each day brings new dreams to pursue. In the autumn of life, There's a settling down-

Contentment and sureness in what we do.

In the winter of life, Comes peace and wisdom, Time to relax and reminisce, too...

But with the passing of these seasons, Life is still not done, not through, For there is yet another season, When each spirit is renewed.

And it is in this calm fifth season, In this hopeful second spring, A time of cleansing and rebirth, A time of new awakening.

Each person's life will come full circle, Even as the seasons do, To start another, different life, Much better than the one we knew. -C.A. Schlea, The Fifth Season

Memorial Service 2007

We are pleased to announce that we will be having our annual Hospice with Heart Memorial Service on Sunday, May 6, 2007.

The service will be held at the Council Bluffs Senior Center, 714 S Main Street in Council Bluffs starting at 3:00 p.m. Invitations have been sent out to the immediate family members but we would like to extend this invitation to all other family members and friends of the loved ones we cared for in 2006.

Our patients mean a lot to us and we look forward to honor-

ing them during the service. We hope this will bring back some cherished memories for you as we celebrate the lives of your loved ones. Our whole staff looks forward to seeing all the family members again. We hope to see you there. If you have any questions about the service, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

In memory of those Hospice with Heart cared for in 2006

Picking Up Stones Together by Frank Fast, Chaplain

Did you ever think while working through your grief in the loss of the one that you loved that you could handle it yourself? You know that you didn't need any help. There is a Gourma proverb from Ghana that says, "One finger will not pick up a stone." Try it, it's impossible. You see, the support of friends, family and others who have suffered loss are like fingers working together to "lift



"One finger will not pick up a stone"

the stone" of loneliness, hurt and need.

Remember that at times you may be the index finger in need of the others and it's you who need to find those who encourage and help you. But, there are also times when you may feel that for someone else you are just a 'pinky' but it is also then that they will say that they couldn't have worked through their grief without you. We are reminded in Galatians 6:2 that we are to "Bear one another's burdens".

Artificial Nutrition (Food) and Hydration (Fluids) at the End of Life

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

It is very common for doctors to provide fluids and food to people who are very sick or recovering from surgery. This is called “artificial nutrition and hydration” and like all medical treatments, it can be helpful or harmful depending on the situation.

When there is no hope of recovery from an illness or an injury, decisions about artificial nutrition and hydration at the end of life can be very difficult, especially for loved ones. If the person who is ill or injured can not communicate, families can have different opinions and be torn apart.

In order to make an informed decision about artificial nutrition and hydration at the end of life, it is essential to understand how the body processes food and fluids. The information below explains the medical facts about artificial nutrition and hydration at the end of life so that you can make the informed decisions for yourself or a loved one.

What is artificial nutrition and hydration?

Artificial nutrition and hydration is a medical treatment that allows a person to receive nutrition (food) and hydration (fluids) when they are no longer able to take them by mouth.

When is it used? How is it given?

Artificial nutrition and hydration is given to a person who for some reason cannot eat or drink enough to sustain life or health. Doctors can provide nutrition and hydration through intravenous (IV) administration or by putting a tube in the stomach.

Is artificial nutrition and hydration different from ordinary eating and drinking?

Yes, providing artificial nutrition and hydration requires technical skill and has many serious risks. Professional skill and training are necessary to insert the tube, to make decisions about how much and what type of feed to give, and to monitor for side effects.

Artificial nutrition and hydration do not offer the comforts that come from the taste and texture of food and liquids. Doctors and nurses control when and how much will be given rather than the person.

What happens when artificial nutrition and hydration is given to patients who are at the end of life?

When someone with a serious life-limiting illness is no longer able to eat or drink it usually means that the body is beginning to stop functioning. Artificial nutrition and hydration will not bring the person back to a healthy state. Most doctors agree that artificial nutrition and hydration can increase suffering in patients who are dying and no longer have the ability or interest to eat food and drink liquids themselves. Artificial nutrition and hydration can add more discomfort to a dying person’s physical symptoms such as: bloating, swelling, cramps, diarrhea, and shortness of breath.

It is important to remember that the person’s body is beginning to shut down because of the disease and dying process, not because of the absence of food and liquid. There are ways to ensure a person’s comfort at the end of life by treating dry lips and mouth. Hospice and palliative care professionals are experts in providing comfort treatments.

Is it considered suicide to refuse artificial nutrition and hydration?

No. Everyone has the right to refuse or discontinue a medical treatment. A person at the end of life is dying, not by choice, but because of a particular disease. It is not considered suicide to refuse or stop a medical treatment that cannot bring back health.

What does the law say about artificial nutrition and hydration?

Legally, artificial nutrition and hydration is considered a medical treatment that may be refused at the end of life. If the patient is able to make decisions, the patient can tell his/her physician what he or she wants. For patients who can no longer talk about their wishes, certain states demand strong evidence to show what the patient’s wishes are. When there is uncertainty or conflict about whether or not a person would want the medical treatment, treatment will usually be continued.

This is why completing and talking about your advanced directives are important so that there will be no doubt about what kind of medical treatments you would want or not want at the end of life. To receive a free copy of your state specific advance directives, go to www.caringinfo.org or call 800/658-8898. *It’s About How You LIVE!*

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MEETING OUR NURSES

We would like to introduce our Registered Nurses to the Hospice with Heart team. They are: Michelle Copsey, Joyce Christensen and Cynthia Book. These caring individuals have become a wonderful asset and provide quality hospice care to our patients. WELCOME!!!

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

National Volunteer Week was celebrated April 15-21. We are very pleased with all of our volunteers and thank them for all they do. Thanks to: Janet Hartman, Karen Anderson, Victoria Burnett, John Edwards, Janette Jones, Janet Rains, Connie Richardson and Ruth White. You all do a great job!

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Hospice with Heart would like to take this opportunity to say Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers out there and hope your day is filled with everything you deserve. You are all a true gift from God.
