



IN TOUCH

Physician Newsletter

Comfort and dignity as life nears its end

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MEDICARING COMBINES TREATMENT WITH HOSPICE

One of the biggest obstacles to patients seeking hospice care is giving up treatment for their terminal condition, as required by current Medicare rules.



"I enrolled because I thought it would improve service and it's kind of an experiment," says Bob Heck. "I've always been curious." See his story on back page.

But under a new Medicare model program underway at Hospice of the Valley, patients can continue such care with community physicians while also getting hospice care.

Hospice of the Valley is the only hospice in Arizona chosen by the federal government to participate. We call the program *MediCaring*. It ends in 2021.

Medicare is testing the hypothesis that hospice and palliative care given at the same time as treatment will improve quality of care, lower cost and decrease hospital stays. Participating hospices collaborate with community physicians.

To make a referral, call (602) 530-6900. For more information, contact Barbara Volk-Craft, PhD, project director, bvolkcraft@hov.org.

MediCaring is for people who:

- Have advanced cancer, congestive heart failure, COPD or HIV/AIDS.
- Have been covered by Medicare Part A and Part B for past 12 months.
- Are certified for hospice care by a physician and wish to continue their treatments of choice.
- Have had at least one hospital or ER visit and three office visits with any Medicare-certified provider in the past year.
- Live in a traditional home residential setting.

MediCaring services include:

- Home visits from a nurse, social worker, nurse's aide, volunteer, chaplain and grief counselor.
- Care coordination and case management.
- 24/7/365 access to clinical support.
- Assistance with goals of care and advance care planning.
- Symptom management.
- Covered by Medicare with no out-of-pocket patient fees.



MEDICARING PATIENT GETS BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Bob Heck sees no contradiction in pursuing treatment for incurable cancer, wearing a “do-not-resuscitate” bracelet and getting hospice care. “I want to go on a little bit longer,” he said.

But if he has a heart attack, stroke or some other catastrophic medical event, he does not want to be kept alive if there is little quality of life.

Bob—a winter visitor from Wisconsin—lives with his partner Barbara McDermid in a Mesa mobile home park. In December he was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer and lymphoma. His symptoms rapidly worsened. He started chemotherapy in January and within weeks was feeling practically normal. He also joined Hospice of the Valley’s *MediCaring* program, which provides home-based supportive care to Medicare patients getting treatment.

Barbara is reassured knowing she can call Hospice of the Valley for help 24/7. “The anxiety was taken away,” she said. “It’s a relief.”



In February, Bob celebrated his 94th birthday with 35 family members and friends.

“I like the feeling of not being alone,” Bob said. “I feel confident that you’ll be there when we need you.”

A not-for-profit organization

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