What is Palliative Care?

“Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. This type of care is focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain, and stress of a serious illness—whatever the diagnosis. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and family. Palliative care is provided by a team of doctors, nurses, and other specialists who work with a patient’s other physicians to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and can be provided together with curative treatment.”

McInturff, B, Harrington L: Presentation of 2011 Research on Palliative Care, Center to Advance Palliative Care and American Cancer Society Action Network, June 22, 2011. www.capc.org
American Society of Clinical Oncology: Position on Palliative Care

Based on strong evidence from a phase III RCT, patients with metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer should be offered concurrent palliative care and oncologic care at initial diagnosis. (Temel, NEJM 2010)

Substantial evidence demonstrates that palliative care—when combined with standard cancer care or as the main focus of care—leads to better patient and caregiver outcomes:

• improvement in symptoms, QOL, and patient satisfaction
• reduced caregiver burden.
• more appropriate referral to and use of hospice
• reduced use of futile intensive care.

ASCO Position on Palliative Care

“While evidence clarifying optimal delivery of palliative care to improve patient outcomes is evolving, no trials to date have demonstrated harm to patients and caregivers, or excessive costs, from early involvement of palliative care. Therefore, it is the Panel’s expert consensus that combined standard oncology care and palliative care should be considered early in the course of illness for any patient with metastatic cancer and/or high symptom burden.”

What Other Cancer Groups Say

- NCCN: Palliative care should be available on site or by referral
- ASCO’s Quality Oncology Practice Initiative (QOPI) quality measures include
  - Assessment and treatment of pain early in the course of care
  - Timely and appropriate referrals to hospice
What Patients and Families Should Know

• Does my oncology clinic or cancer center have a palliative care team/program?

• If so, how can I access them?

• What other supportive services are available? Psycho-oncology, Social work, financial counselors, case management, etc. Of note, this is highly variable from site to site, and even country to country.
GRACE: Global Resource for Advancing Cancer Education

LUNGevity: Find it. Treat it. Live.