



Dear Physician Colleague,

As many of you know, Hospice of Southern Maine operates a licensed and Medicare-certified hospice program, providing services in homes and long term care facilities throughout York and Cumberland Counties, and caring for inpatients at the Gosnell Memorial Hospice House. It is the only free-standing, non-profit hospice provider with the single focused mission of providing comprehensive end of life care. If HSM has cared for your patients, we hope the services met your standards for excellence. If you have not yet referred to HSM, we hope that you will consider it when a patient of yours arrives at the decision to cease futile aggressive therapies and instead pursue the goals of comfort and quality of life for whatever time remains.

HSM's specialized professional staff provides skilled and compassionate care.

- The single focused mission of providing excellent end of life care enables professional staff to develop extensive experience and strong skills in palliative and hospice care.
- Nursing staff are encouraged to pursue certification in Hospice and Palliative care.
- Staff development and continuing education are emphasized in the quality initiatives. Special sessions such as a formal healthcare ethics program and Alzheimer's training add dimension to their clinical hospice expertise.
- Physician coverage is available 24 hrs a day. All physicians have work experience in palliative medicine, and either have or are pursuing board certification in hospice and palliative medicine. Physicians round daily in the Gosnell Memorial Hospice House, review all admissions to the home program, and are always available to provide guidance to the nursing staff or to primary physicians who have patients enrolled in the program.
- Current clinical Medical Staff includes six physicians and a nurse practitioner. Dr. Mark Wrona works full time as our Medical Director, with Drs. Ross Wadland, Tom Keating, Paul Han, Mary Becker and Isabella Stumpf providing regular additional coverage. Jason Libby is our NP.

Family-centered care is a key part of hospice philosophy.

- Hospice care focuses as much on the family as on the dying patient. Social workers, chaplains and trained hospice volunteers are offered to every family.
- Professional and volunteer-led bereavement services are offered at no additional cost for one year following the death of a loved one.
- Some patients and families are not yet ready to enroll in a hospice program. The *Living Well Through Life Transitions* program is a free service that is offered to families in which a loved one is ill with a terminal illness but is still seeking aggressive treatment. This program provides 4 hours per week of non-medical aid and support from a hospice volunteer, as well as limited social work and chaplain visits. The *Living Well* program does not include nursing care or home health aide services. A similar family support program is also available for pediatric patients; a program called *Tidewaters*.
- Certified Hospice volunteers are an invaluable resource to families. Volunteers receive 40 hrs of formal training, substantially exceeding what is required by Medicare.

Appropriate end of life care is an essential element in the healthcare continuum.

- Hospice seeks three basic outcomes – self-determined life closure, safe and comfortable dying, effective grieving.
- Providing excellent palliative and hospice care to dying patients and their families is not only a critical component of an ethical healthcare delivery system, it is also a mark of a responsible and caring society
- When asked, 80% of Americans state they would like to die at home. In Maine, however, far fewer actually die at home. Increased referral for hospice services enables more dying patients to remain at home with their families.

- Encouraging appropriate hospice use saves Medicare dollars overall. Studies show cost of care for Medicare patients in the last year of life who receive conventional care is greater than the cost for patients who move to the hospice model of care, yet comfort and satisfaction increase.
- Access to a hospice facility reduces hospitalizations of dying patients who require acute pain and symptom management that can not be managed at home, reducing costs as better end of life care is provided in less costly settings.

Not-for-profit status creates a strong link to the community.

- Program decisions do not require corporate profit above operational costs, and revenue exceeding operational needs is returned to the community through additional program support.
- Commitment to serving members of our community regardless of ability to pay is a core principle of HSM.
- HSM offers family support and bereavement services at no cost to the entire community regardless of whether or not the family member was enrolled with the program.
- Though a non-profit organization, there is a firm commitment to wise business practices – through efficiency and cost-effective operations, more services can be provided to the community.
- The Board is comprised of volunteer community leaders, including several physicians, which ensures that community needs are the foremost concern.
- HSM grew out of a community based initiative and began as an integration of several small existing programs, supported by local hospitals. Strong ties continue with our area hospitals and home health agencies.
- Supporting organizations that also have representation on the Board include Maine Medical Center, Southern Maine Medical Center, Visiting Nurse Services, SMMC Visiting Nurses, and Maine Center for Cancer Medicine.
- Community and professional education is part of HSM's commitment to the community. Students in various health disciplines, including medical students and residents from area teaching institutions, are welcomed and provided with learning opportunities. Institutions include USM, UNE, Maine Medical Center, Tufts and others. General community offerings on topics such as advance directives and grieving are also regularly given.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the physicians who provide services at HSM or our physician Board members if you have questions or feedback. We appreciate your interest and support in providing choices and access to high quality end of life care for your patients.

Sincerely yours,



Mark Wrona, M.D.
Medical Director



Joel Botler, M.D.
Board Member



Dan Hayes, M.D.
Board Member