



## The benefits of an early hospice referral

Hospice is traditionally thought to be for patients who are in the last six months of life, but some patients stay on for years if their disease process is slow. Unfortunately, half of all referrals to hospice are made within the last 15 days of a patient's life, with many patients dying just hours after being referred to hospice care. For these patients, there is very little that can be done other than to quickly get their symptoms under control before they pass away.

Patients who are referred to hospice care early in their disease process can receive the full benefit of hospice care, including seeing their medical, social, and spiritual needs met before they die. Hospice patients only rarely need to go to the hospital or to the emergency room, as hospice staff is able to perform most treatments at home. Early referral helps give the patient and family time to plan for the upcoming death, and to be together during the end of the patient's life.

Physicians benefit from early referrals as well, by having skilled hospice professionals help them in the care of their patients. Physicians may choose to continue to manage and follow patients while they are on hospice. Hospice physicians are also available for consult in the case of a palliative care need.

**If you are unsure if it is time to refer a patient to Angela Hospice please refer to our page entitled ["When to Refer your Patient to Hospice"](#) or call Jim Boal, M.D., at 734-953-6033.**

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