



## Palliative Care in Neuro-oncology: Enhancing Quality of Life amidst the Journey

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### DESCRIPTION

For patients diagnosed with neuro-oncological conditions, the journey is often marked by complex challenges, both physical and emotional. Palliative care serves as a crucial aspect of comprehensive cancer care, focusing on alleviating symptoms, managing distress, and enhancing quality of life for patients and their families. In the context of neuro-oncology, where symptoms can be particularly debilitating and treatment options limited, palliative care plays an essential role in providing holistic support and comfort throughout the disease trajectory.

Palliative care in neuro-oncology encompasses a multidisciplinary approach that addresses the diverse needs of patients facing brain tumors and other central nervous system malignancies. The primary goal of palliative care is to improve symptom management, addressing common symptoms such as pain, fatigue, nausea, cognitive impairment, and psychological distress. Through the use of pharmacological interventions, supportive therapies, and psychosocial support, palliative care specialists work collaboratively with the oncology team to optimize symptom control and enhance patient comfort.

One of the key principles of palliative care in neuro-oncology is early integration into the treatment continuum, beginning at the time of diagnosis and continuing throughout the disease trajectory. By initiating palliative care early in the disease course, patients and their families can benefit from the comprehensive support and symptom management services that palliative care provides. Moreover, early palliative care involvement has been shown to improve patient and family satisfaction, reduce hospital admissions, and enhance communication and decision-making regarding treatment goals and preferences.

In addition to symptom management, palliative care in

neuro-oncology focuses on addressing the psychosocial and existential distress experienced by patients and their families. Coping with a diagnosis of brain tumor can evoke feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, and existential distress, affecting patients' emotional well-being and overall quality of life. Palliative care specialists provide counseling, support groups, and spiritual care to address these psychological and existential concerns, helping patients and families navigate the emotional challenges of living with a life-limiting illness.

Furthermore, palliative care emphasizes communication and shared decision-making, empowering patients to actively participate in their care and make informed choices aligned with their values and preferences. Advance care planning discussions, including goals of care, treatment preferences, and end-of-life wishes, are integral components of palliative care in neuro-oncology. By facilitating open and honest communication between patients, families, and healthcare providers, palliative care ensures that treatment decisions are informed by patients' values, beliefs, and goals, promoting autonomy, dignity, and respect throughout the care continuum.

Moreover, palliative care extends beyond the patient to encompass support for family caregivers who play a vital role in the care and support of their loved ones with neuro-oncological conditions. Caregiving for a loved one with a brain tumor can be physically, emotionally, and financially demanding, leading to caregiver burden, stress, and burnout. Palliative care provides education, respite care, and psychosocial support to caregivers, helping them navigate the challenges of caregiving and maintain their own health and well-being.

Despite the many benefits of palliative care in neuro-oncology, significant barriers to access and utilization exist, including misconceptions about palliative care, inadequate training among healthcare providers, and limited availability of palliative

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care services in certain settings. Addressing these barriers requires a concerted effort from healthcare institutions, policymakers, and advocacy groups to raise awareness, expand access to palliative care services, and integrate palliative care into standard oncology practice.

Palliative care plays a critical role in enhancing quality of life and providing comprehensive support for patients with neuro-oncological conditions and their families. By focusing on symptom management, psychosocial support, communication, and shared decision-making, palliative care ensures that patients receive holistic, person-centered care throughout the disease trajectory. Through early integration, proactive

symptom management, and interdisciplinary collaboration, palliative care in neuro-oncology strives to alleviate suffering, promote dignity, and improve overall well-being for patients facing the challenges of brain tumors and other central nervous system malignancies.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest.