

# Agape Healthcare

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Providing supportive care to families dealing with serious illness

by Jeannette Moninger

Kelly Bastian, managing director of palliative care and a family nurse practitioner

*If you or a loved one is diagnosed with a debilitating illness, you may need help managing the disease and treatment side effects and planning for end-of-life care. The compassionate team of experts at Agape Healthcare can help. Agape provides palliative and hospice care throughout the metro-Denver area.*

## The Difference between Palliative Care and Hospice

“Palliative care benefits anyone whose quality of life is negatively affected by a serious chronic illness,” says Kelly Bastian, managing director and a family nurse practitioner. Such illnesses may include heart failure, lung disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, dementia and cancer.

Palliative care providers at Agape collaborate with a patient’s doctor to ease nausea, fatigue, pain or other disease symptoms or treatment side effects. The team also facilitates conversations with patients and their loved ones about goals of care. “It’s important for a family to understand a patient’s wishes about medical interventions,” says Bastian. “If needed, we can help with a living will and healthcare power of attorney.”

Palliative care experts also educate families about their loved one’s disease and what to expect if the illness progresses. Anyone with a debilitating illness can benefit from palliative care, which is often covered by insurance.

Hospice care is for patients whose physicians have given a presumed life expectancy of six months or less. “Hospice helps make a patient’s quality of life the best it can be during the time that’s remaining,” says Bastian, who stresses that the focus is on comfort and support for both patients and loved ones.

Both palliative care and hospice specialists visit patients at their place of residence, whether that’s a private home, assisted living facility

or nursing home. “We see firsthand how a patient is coping, such as how well they can get around, what foods they’re eating and the structure of their support system,” says Bastian. “This information helps their doctors and us provide appropriate care.”

The hospice and palliative care team at Agape includes nurse practitioners who can write prescriptions as needed; certified nursing assistants who provide patient care like bathing; social workers who support families with resources; and chaplains for spiritual guidance. Agape also has volunteers who are qualified to offer therapeutic services such as massage and Reiki, a form of energy healing. Volunteers also stay with patients to give caregivers much-needed breaks.

Too many families are hesitant to use palliative care or hospice services, says Bastian. “These services aren’t about hastening death, they’re about comfort for both patient and family,” she says. “The number one comment I hear from families is that they wish they had called us sooner.”



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