

CHCA Project ECHO Integrated Seniors Care

All Teach, All Learn

Bridging the Knowledge Gap in
Home and Primary Health Care



Integrating a Palliative Approach Earlier: A Team-Based Approach for Complex Chronic Conditions

Presenter:

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Host: Jennifer Campagnolo, CHCA
June 24, 2026

Land Acknowledgement



Artist Credit: Patrick Hunter

We recognize with humility and gratitude that Canada is located in the traditional, historical and ceded and unceded Lands of First Nation, Inuit and Metis Peoples. On behalf of us all, we acknowledge and pay respect to the Indigenous peoples past, present and future who continue to work, educate and contribute to the strength of this country.

Introductions



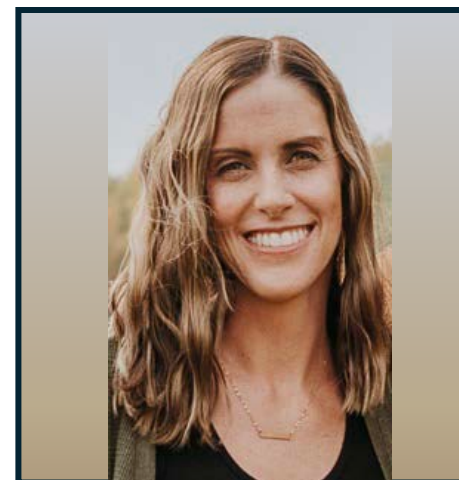
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June 2026



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- Presenter: Cheryl Spencer
- Relationships with commercial interests:
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DISCLOSURE OF COMMERCIAL SUPPORT

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 - None to be disclosed.

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- The information presented in this CME program is based on recent information that is explicitly "evidence-based".
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Learning Objectives

Describe the value of applying an integrated palliative approach when supporting people living with complex and life-limiting conditions

Recognize opportunities to introduce a palliative approach earlier in the illness trajectory

Reflect on how providers across sectors can support more timely, person- and family-centred palliative approaches to care



Domain 1: A Shared Foundation For Delivering Palliative Care Across Disciplines

Across professions, Domain 1 emphasizes:

- Understanding the philosophy of a palliative approach
- Recognizing opportunities for earlier integration
- Working collaboratively within interdisciplinary teams
- Including family and caregivers
- Seeing people holistically
- Addressing barriers to care



Why Do We Need a Palliative Approach?

People

- Living longer with serious illness

Families

- Providing increasing support and care

Systems

- Navigating growing complexity and uncertainty



Why Earlier Matters:

Illness Trajectories Have Changed

Traditional Model

- Healthy → Serious Illness → Dying → Death

Today's Reality

- Living for Years with Progressive Illness, Frailty, and Increasing Complexity



What Is Palliative Care?

Palliative care:

- Improves quality of life
- Prevents and relieves suffering
- Addresses physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and practical concerns
- Supports people and families
- Can be provided alongside treatments intended to prolong life



What Is a Palliative Approach?

A palliative approach integrates palliative care principles throughout the illness trajectory.

A palliative approach:

- Applies palliative principles earlier
- Is integrated into routine care
- Focuses on quality of life throughout illness
- Includes family and caregivers
- Supports care across settings and transitions

Rather than:

- Diagnosis → Treatment → Palliative Care

It becomes:

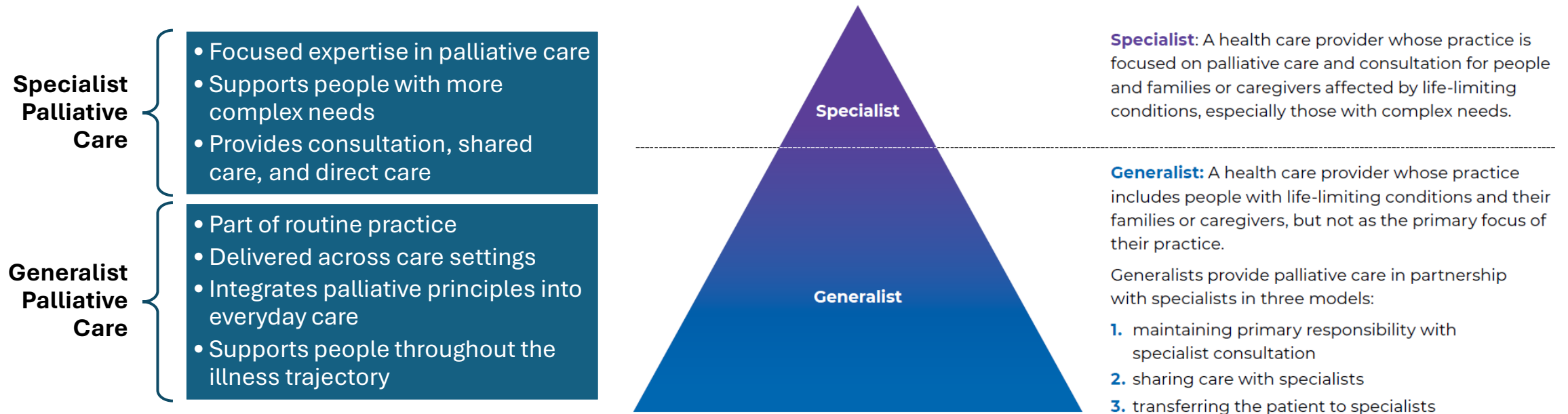
- Diagnosis → Treatment + Palliative Approach Throughout Illness



Common Misconceptions About Palliative Care

- ❌ Palliative care is only for the last days of life
- ❌ Palliative care means giving up
- ❌ Palliative care is only for cancer
- ❌ Palliative care is only provided by specialists
- ✅ A palliative approach can begin early
- ✅ It can be provided alongside active treatment
- ✅ It is relevant for many chronic illnesses
- ✅ All members of the care team have a role

Generalist and Specialist Palliative Care



Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (2021) *The Canadian Interdisciplinary Palliative Care Competency Framework*, p. 7



Core Principles of a Palliative Approach

Person-Centred

- Quality of life, values, goals, and preferences

Family-Centred

- Recognizing and including family and caregivers

Collaborative

- Shared responsibility across disciplines and settings

Equitable

- Recognizing and addressing barriers to care



Seeing the Whole Person

A palliative approach considers:

- Physical needs
- Emotional and mental health needs
- Social needs
- Spiritual needs
- Practical concerns
- Family and caregiver needs, including grief and bereavement



Why a Palliative Approach Matters

Earlier integration can support:

- Better quality of life
- Earlier conversations about goals and priorities
- Improved symptom management
- Greater participation in decision-making
- Better support for caregivers
- More coordinated care



Recognizing Opportunities for a Palliative Approach Across the Illness Journey

- Diagnosis of a serious chronic illness
- Changes in function or increasing frailty
- Increasing symptom burden
- Recurrent hospitalizations
- Increasing complexity of care
- Growing caregiver burden
- Greater uncertainty about the future



Domain 1 Across Professions

Common
themes
across
disciplines:

Earlier Identification

- Recognize who may benefit from a palliative approach

Family and Caregiver Inclusion

- Include family and caregivers as part of the unit of care

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- Work within and contribute to the care team

Holistic Care

- Address physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and practical needs

Person-Centred Care

- Focus on what matters most to the person and family



Domain 1 Competencies: Principles of a Palliative Approach to Care

- Domain 1 focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to:
 - Understand the core philosophy of palliative care and the palliative approach to care;
 - Identify people who would benefit from a palliative approach;
 - Understand the interdisciplinary team;
 - Address barriers to care;
 - Include designated family or caregiver(s) in the unit of care;
 - See people holistically;
 - Provide a palliative approach to care;
 - Ensure a thorough awareness of resources;
 - Understand the diverse beliefs and cultural heritage that may inform end-of-life practices.

Every Profession Contributes Differently

Profession	Example Contributions
Nurses	Introduce a palliative approach early in the illness trajectory; Identify people who may benefit from a palliative approach; Collaborate with the interdisciplinary team; Include family and caregivers in care; Provide holistic, person- and family-centred care.
Social Workers	Support quality of life and help families and caregivers cope; Identify people who may benefit from a palliative approach; Work collaboratively within interdisciplinary teams; Address barriers to care and service access; Connect people and families with resources and supports.
Generalist Physicians	Introduce a palliative approach early in the illness trajectory; Recognize illness trajectories and transition points; Provide holistic care that addresses physical, psychosocial, spiritual, and practical concerns; Incorporate culturally responsive and community-informed care; Address misconceptions and barriers that limit access to palliative care.
Personal Support Workers	Apply the principles and practices of a palliative approach; Help identify people who may benefit from a palliative approach; Work as part of the interdisciplinary team; Include and support family and caregivers; Recognize physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual needs.
Volunteers	Understand the philosophy of palliative care and a palliative approach; Provide presence, listening, respect, and acknowledgement; Work as part of the interdisciplinary team; Include and support family and caregivers; Recognize the impact of serious illness on family roles; Acknowledge physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual needs.
Spiritual Care Professionals	Understand how treatments and therapies contribute to a person's total pain; Recognize diverse beliefs, faith traditions, philosophies, and worldviews; Support spiritual, existential, and emotional concerns; Work collaboratively within the interdisciplinary team.

Wrap Up

A palliative approach is not limited to end-of-life care

Earlier integration can improve quality of life and support decision-making

Care should focus on the person, family, and what matters most to them

Every member of the care team has a role to play

A palliative approach is a shared responsibility across settings and disciplines

Thank You!

Cheryl Spencer, Interim CEO

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Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association

Association canadienne de soins palliatifs

Meet Mrs. Maria Costa*

Background and Living Situation

- 76-year-old woman living alone in Edmonton
- Recently diagnosed with heart failure
- Wants to remain independent and stay at home
- Receives home care twice weekly for bathing and medication reminders
- Family support is limited: daughter visits weekends; son joins appointments by phone
- No structured conversation yet about goals, quality of life, or needed supports

Medical History and Functional Status

- Recently diagnosed heart failure, chronic kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis
- Two recent ED visits for shortness of breath, swelling, fatigue
- Ongoing breathlessness, low energy, reduced mobility, have lowered her confidence of leaving her home
- Active treatment is underway through primary care and specialist follow-up

* This case study is based on real-world events and experiences but is a composite scenario, with names and identifying details changed to protect privacy and confidentiality.

Meet Mrs. Maria Costa*

Current Concerns

- Maria does not want repeated emergency visits
- Care is focused on diagnosis, medications, monitoring, and appointments
- Less attention has been given to comfort, function, confidence, and daily life
- No clear home plan for worsening breathlessness or when to call for help
- Opportunity to introduce a palliative approach early, alongside active treatment

Caregiver and Care Team Perspectives

- Daughter is concerned about rapid changes in Maria's health and confidence
- Son needs reassurance that palliative care does not mean "giving up"
- Home care team sees need for earlier conversations about symptoms, expectations, priorities, and planning
- Team-based care could help Maria remain safely at home as needs evolve

Challenges

How can Maria's team introduce a palliative approach early, alongside active treatment?

What team-based actions would help Maria clarify priorities, manage symptoms, avoid crises, and remain at home?

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Discussion / Q&A



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Upcoming TeleECHO Clinics

cdnhomecare.ca/chca-project-echo-integrated-seniors-care

CHCA Project ECHO Integrated Seniors Care

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Caring for Others, Sustaining Ourselves: Self-Care in Integrated Palliative Care

July 15, 2026 | 12–1pm Eastern

Optimizing Comfort and Quality of Life: Integrated Palliative Approaches to Symptom Management in Complex Chronic Conditions

September 30, 2026 | 12–1pm Eastern

Thank you for taking a moment to complete the survey!