



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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November National Hospice and Palliative Care Month Sparks Opportunity to Dispel Myths

About End of Life Care

It's Not About Giving Up – It's About Making the Most of the Time You Have Left

Falls Church, VA - November 6, 2017 - Americans are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. Yet inevitably - 100% of us will die, and the clear majority will experience debilitating advanced illness for which curative treatment is no longer effective.

Malene Davis, MBA, MSN, RN, President and CEO of Capital Caring and West Virginia Caring and a nationally recognized health care authority on advanced illness, wants to dispel perceptions that hospice and palliative care is only meant for the final few days of life.

“Sadly, most Americans receive too little care, too late to make a difference in their quality of life during their final days,” said Davis. “The best results occur when the patient receives hospice care for three to six months before they pass on. Most patients receive only 17 days of hospice care on average.”

Davis cited a well-known study comparing hospice with non-hospice patients from the Medicare data set. They found for certain diagnoses including congestive heart failure, lung cancer, pancreatic cancer and colon cancer, life expectancy is longer for those receiving hospice care compared to patients who did not receive hospice care. The study, published in the *Journal of Pain and Management*, found on average the hospice patients lived one month longer than those who did not receive hospice care.

“First and foremost, hospice is not a place where one goes to die,” explained Davis. “Hospice is about living your remaining days with an advanced illness as fully as possible, with less pain, more comfort and surrounded by loved ones,” she continued.

Hospice care is fully covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance plans and HMOs. Surprisingly, only 10% of hospice-eligible patients are using this concierge service. Despite the low figures, research shows that hospice usage in the U.S. is growing. Every year, between 1.4 and 1.5 million Americans are cared for by a hospice provider for at least one day. However, probably close to 17 million patients are eligible for the service, but are not using it.

According to Davis, “most doctors do not have end-of-life conversations with their patients or families, even when they know the patient is dying and medical therapies are no longer working. More often, when those conversations do occur, they wait longer than necessary to talk with families about quality of life options for managing the end of life.” She continued, “Earlier use of hospice equates to demonstrably superior end-of-life experiences for patients and their families.”

Hospice benefits provide for up to six months of coverage for eligible patients however the average duration for patients under hospice care is approximately two weeks.

November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month. Capital Caring is committed to educating consumers about life-enhancing health services. They are using a variety of activities in November to advance this message including a fundraiser for its 40th Anniversary Passion for Caring Gala on November 11, 2017 at the MGM Grand at National Harbor.

About Malene Davis -President and CEO Malene Davis is a nurse with more than three decades of experience in hospice care. She has personally cared for thousands of dying patients and has received numerous awards for her advocacy work and educational initiatives. She is a prominent national speaker and author. She completed her BSN nursing degree, and holds dual Masters Degrees in Business Administration (MBA) and Nursing (MSN) from West Virginia University.

For more information or to arrange an interview with Ms. Davis please contact:

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About Capital Caring: Since 1977, Capital Caring has simply improved care for those facing life-limiting illness through direct support of patients and their families, public education and advocacy. Since its inception, Capital Caring has provided hospice, palliative care, and counseling to nearly 110,000 patients and their families. Almost 800 employees and 1,000 volunteers provide these services to nearly 1,400 patients each day. As one of the nation's oldest and largest non-profit providers of hospice and palliative care, Capital Caring is proud to provide nearly \$3 million in charitable care to families in need annually. To learn more about Capital Caring, **visit www.capitalcaring.org or call 800-869-2136.**

