

Compassionate Community Fact Sheet



With Canada's aging population, health care systems—and individual caregivers—are under a great deal of pressure to deliver palliative care.

Palliative care is a shared responsibility

Palliative care is often misunderstood as treatment for patients in their last days and weeks of life. In fact, it focuses on improving quality of life for people facing serious illness and death, as soon as an illness has been diagnosed. Palliative care also encompasses the health and well-being of caregivers, which includes grief and bereavement support.

What is a Compassionate Community?

When it comes to palliative care, the health care system is only part of the equation. Compassionate Communities respond to local community needs and empower individuals to provide important physical, emotional, social, spiritual and practical support to patients, families and caregivers.

At its core, a Compassionate Community is about improving the quality of life for people with a life-limiting illness and their families by encouraging people to advocate and provide assistance and practical support within their community.

Fostering the Compassionate Community movement is identified in Health Canada's Framework on Palliative Care in Canada as a key priority to build greater care capacity in communities.¹

Where are Compassionate Communities?

A Compassionate Community can be a geographical location (e.g. city, town, neighbourhood), a social group (e.g. book club, running group), a group of people united by a common purpose (e.g. members of a faith community, co-workers), and even an online community.

Did You Know?



Family caregivers provide more than 80% of care needed by patients with serious illness or long-term conditions.

With Canada's aging population, the number of caregivers and the support needed from those caregivers is expected to increase.²



Compassionate Communities widen the circle of caring and provide much-needed support to patients and caregivers facing serious illness and death.

Empowering people to help members of their community

A Compassionate Community can start by simply providing support to individuals—things like preparing meals or walking the dog—and can grow to encompass an action plan for better support within the community that includes activities such as hosting an Advance Care Planning workshop in schools and workplaces or hosting events at museums or art galleries that raise awareness about the experiences of death, dying, caregiving, and grief.

What can a Compassionate Community do?

Compassionate Communities engage with local government, institutions and organizations to create policies and practical guidance that support people dealing with serious illness, caregiving, death, and grieving.

They also create opportunities to help normalize the conversation around illness and death, and celebrate people, events and organizations that bring the Compassionate Community to life.

Impact of Compassionate Communities

Compassionate Communities across Canada help patients and caregivers as they experience dying, death, caregiving and grieving. They empower and support patients and caregivers in the community and they facilitate improved quality of life and mental health throughout the palliative and end-of-life journey. Compassionate Communities also increase awareness of access to palliative care and other services, as well as reduce palliative care-related hospital admissions and reduce lengths of stay in hospitals for patients and their families.

Pallium Canada's Approach

Pallium Canada recognizes the critical role of community in ensuring that every Canadian who requires palliative care receives it early, effectively, and compassionately. Pallium provides tools and resources to accelerate the integration of Compassionate Communities across Canada such as the Compassionate Community Startup Toolkit, created to help community champions mobilize their efforts. Looking forward, Pallium is working to develop enhanced toolkits and resources targeted to support and meet the specific needs of key areas within communities, including workplaces and faith communities. Pallium is also taking a leadership role to increase communication and networking nationally among communities and community champions through the development of The Compassionate Communities Exchange that facilitates dialogue, collaboration, and sharing of best practices and resources.

It all begins with a champion - you!

To bring support and resources to your community, contact us today for more information, and learn more at pallium.ca/compassionate-communities.



- 1 **Health Canada.** (2018). Framework on palliative care in Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/reports-publications/palliative-care/framework-palliative-care-canada.html>
- 2 **Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association.** (2013). Valuing caregiving and caregivers: Family caregivers in the integrated approach to palliative care. Retrieved from <http://www.hpcintegration.ca/media/37049/TWF-valuing-caregivers-report-final.pdf>

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