2025 CIRCLE OF LIFE AWARDS

CELEBRATING

INNOVATION

IN PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE



Bristol Hospice — Hawaii

Honolulu, Hawaii

an a lavender-scented bedtime ritual for hospice patients improve quality of life? Just ask Tricia Pancner, regional vice president of operations and senior executive director at Bristol Hospice – Hawaii, about the value of Bristol's tender loving care programs.

"Individualized care plans pay for themselves because of the patient and caregiver satisfaction and the outcomes that we are looking for," she says. "We save money in the long run because they prevent avoidable hospitalizations and symptoms that can be hard to manage."

Bristol Hospice – Hawaii, based in Honolulu, provides hospice and palliative care in patients' homes, long-term care facilities and assisted-living communities.

Ronnie Rombawa, a dialysis patient who also has heart failure, has received supportive care services from Bristol twice in the past two years, and his wife Christine says they were truly lifesaving. After a hospital discharge, he was in so much pain that he could not tolerate the four-hour dialysis treatments he needed to stay alive.

"If it weren't for Bristol's help managing his pain and his nausea, which allowed him to continue with dialysis, he would have given up," Christine Rombawa says. "It really has saved my husband's life and allowed him to have more time with his children and his grandchildren."

Providing culturally sensitive care to its patients, who reflect Native Hawaiian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Western and multicultural traditions, is central to the Bristol Hospice – Hawaii's identity. "With bilingual and multicultural staff — including nurses, social workers, chaplains, and volunteers — we ensure that cultural understanding is not just a value, but a daily practice," Pancner says.

Chaplains and social workers work with patients and their

families to understand and integrate their values, beliefs and spiritual customs into the plan of care. Whenever appropriate, care plans include cultural elements such as ho'oponopono (a reconciliation ritual), respect for ohana (extended family involvement) and honoring ancestor worship or spiritual rituals from various Asian and Pacific Islander traditions.

Bristol Hospice — Hawaii focuses on making palliative care widely available through its relationships with insurers and provider organizations. The organization collaborates with Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) to improve care for their patients who have a serious disease by embedding a palliative care team, including physicians, nurses, social workers and chaplains, into the MCOs.

Because of these relationships, patients with Medicaid can access the medication and services, such as oxygen therapy, they need for symptom management. Counseling services are offered to patients and family members dealing with anxiety, depression and other psychological challenges related to the patient's serious illness. Social workers assist with patients' nonmedical needs such as stable housing, transportation to medical appointments and financial assistance.

INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

/ Contracts
co-developed with
insurers

/ Evening turndown service for hospice patients

/ Meaningful cultural elements in care plans

By increasing access to palliative care, the collaboration has resulted in fewer hospital admissions, Pancner says.

Similarly, Bristol Hospice — Hawaii has worked with private insurers to show how palliative care can improve disease management and reduce emergency department (ED) and hospital utilization. "We brought this issue to the forefront in conversations with private insurance providers, backed by clear data, real-world stories and a vision for a better way forward," Pancner says. "Data prove your value, but real patient experiences resonate deeply with decision-makers."

Insurers may not value palliative care because they do not fully understand what it is. Educating them is a key

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step in successful relationship-building. It's equally important to learn the language of value-based care. "Align your messaging with what matters to payers: improved quality scores, reduced costs and measurable impact on population health," she says.

With each payer, Pancner and her colleagues presented a structured program model, including the interdisciplinary team, care protocols, visit frequency and quality-monitoring process that they use. But each payer has its own workflows and reporting tools, which required Bristol Hospice — Hawaii to be flexible.

"Together, we co-developed contracts," Pancner says. Each contract defines patient eligibility and referral criteria, shared protocols for care coordination and communication, and outcome benchmarks.

Alex Mauricio, president and CEO of Bristol Hospice, appreciates the staff's dedication, compassion and commitment to improving the lives of patients and families. "We believe in providing the highest level of

support, and I couldn't be prouder of our Hawaii team for embodying that mission every day," he says.

That compassion is on display in the organization's Sweet Dreams program, in which certified nursing assistants (CNAs) provide an evening "turndown service" for hospice patients. Patients receive a kit that includes a hands-free speakerphone with a table lamp that can be set to create a calming environment and lavender spray, proven to reduce anxiety and ease restlessness. CNAs use a gentle ritual — perhaps hand and foot soaks or light massage — to help patients feel at peace.

"This is a nonpharmacological approach to support a healthy sleeping pattern and provide extra care and support to the family members and the caregivers as well," says Erin Hamilton, regional vice president.

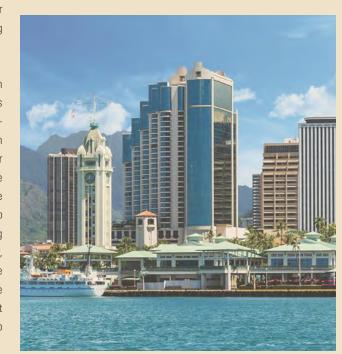
Similarly, the Bright Moments program is designed to help patients with late-stage dementia reduce agitation. More than 40% of hospice patients in the U.S. have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. Bristol Hospice — Hawaii uses evidence-based interventions to improve patients' mood and cognitive engagement and support their independence and dignity.

The Bright Moments program kit includes a music player and headphones — familiar songs can unlock memories and promote relaxation — as well as a weighted blanket, a "therapy bear" and other tools to help patients with dementia, who often experience anxiety and restlessness in the evening.

"The entire kit contains evidence-based, nonpharmacological tools to

help patients and families," Hamilton says.

The Bright Moments and Sweet Dreams programs are available to any palliative care or hospice patient who would benefit, regardless of their insurance coverage or financial status. In addition to improving patient and family satisfaction, the programs reduce the need for medication, after-hours crisis calls, and avoidable hospital transfers and ED visits.



PAST CIRCLE OF LIFE AWARD WINNERS

2023

- Center for Hospice Care, Mishawaka, Ind.
- Palliative Care Program, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore

2020

- Caring Circle of Spectrum Health Lakeland, St. Joseph, Mich.
- Choices and Champions, Novant Health, Winston-Salem, N.C.

2019

- UC Health Palliative Care—Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, Colo.
- University Health System Palliative Care Team, San Antonio
- Hospice of the Western Reserve Navigator Palliative Care Services, Cleveland

2018

- Hospice of the Valley Palliative Home Care Program, Phoenix
- Penn Wissahickon Hospice and Caring Way, Penn Medicine, Bala Cynwyd, Pa.
- Western Connecticut Medical Group (now Nuvance Health Medical Practice), palliative care, Danbury, Conn.

2017

- Bluegrass Care Navigators, Lexington, Ky.
- Providence TrinityCare Hospice and TrinityKids Care, Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center Torrance, and Providence Institute for Human Caring, Torrance, Calif.

2016

- Bon Secours Palliative Medicine, Richmond, Va.
- Cambia Palliative Care Center of Excellence at UW Medicine, Seattle
- Susquehanna Health Hospice and Palliative Care, Williamsport, Pa.

2015

• Care Dimensions, Danvers, Mass.

2014

- OACIS/Palliative Medicine, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pa.
 - Baylor Scott & White Supportive & Palliative Care, Dallas
 - Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital, Yakima, Wash.

2013

- The Denver Hospice, Denver
- Lilian and Benjamin Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute, Mount Sinai Health System, New York City
 - UnityPoint Health, Iowa and Illinois

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