

OHCA Position Statement

Ensuring a Home Care Option at End-of-Life

The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA) advocates for the creation of a strong, reliable and accessible home care system which fully supports Ontarians to remain at home for as long as possible. For the individual requiring palliative care, this means having the option to die at home surrounded by loved ones. This important principle is reflected in Canada's 10-Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care (September 2004), where the federal, provincial and territorial First Ministers agreed to "provide first dollar coverage by 2006 for certain home care services ... [including] case management, nursing, palliative-specific pharmaceuticals and personal care at the end of life." To this end Ontario made a \$115.5 million investment in its End-of-Life Care Strategy to improve care services at home and in the community in October 2005 and \$26.7million targeted specifically at home care on May 1, 2006.

Effective provision of palliative care at home requires a well resourced, competent and flexible home care system to accommodate individuals' needs 24 hours per day seven days a week. This outcome will be

"How we treat those who are dying in our community reflects who we are as a society. All Ontarians have the right to die with dignity, to have access to physical, psychosocial, and spiritual care."

Excerpted from the Ontario Palliative Care Association Mission Statement

realized when all members of the health care team are appropriately integrated and utilized to deliver care. Within home care, a broad team of professionals (physicians, nurses, therapists, personal support workers, community pharmacists, access to required medications, medical equipment and supplies); family,

friends and spiritual support, all form the extended virtual team available to support the palliative client as required. Home care staff maintain palliative expertise and rely on strong linkages to palliative specialists to support their provision of care. Palliative care networks are essential to achieving productive collaboration, continued learning and effective resourcing of the home health care team.

Service allocations within home and community care must be considered in the context of the person's needs, allowing flexibility in service maximums so that symptom management at home is not compromised; and so that relief for informal caregivers, who are essential to palliative care at home, is provided.

OHCA believes that those in home and community care can work effectively with colleagues across the health care system to help more Ontarians realize their wish to die at home. The Association urges the government to ensure that the intent of the Health Accord to provide greater home based palliative care is achieved and reported to the public so that all Ontarians acquire awareness of the possibility of a pain free and peaceful death at home for those with palliative care needs.

As Ontario's health care system evolves and shifts under the leadership of the LHINs, there is an opportunity to achieve the client's wishes by acknowledging the valuable contribution of home care in the management and support of individuals at end-of-life.

The OHCA, *the voice of home care in Ontario*, represents Canadian home care service organizations that deliver quality home care to Ontarians throughout the province. The OHCA advocates for a strong, dependable and accessible home care system for Ontarians. OHCA members are accredited through the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) or the International Standards Association (ISO).

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