



Media Release

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Recognising the value of palliative care – AIHW report

Increasing recognition of the value of palliative care across medical specialties is one reason palliative care related hospitalisations have risen this decade, says Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

A new report from The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows hospitalisations increased by 52% since 2003 – 2004, which also reflects population rises and people living longer, with higher likelihood of chronic diseases.

“Palliative care is a new kid on the block in terms of specialties, but it is gaining more recognition and the value it can add to a person’s life is acknowledged, resulting in more referrals to palliative care,” Ms Callaghan said.

There is also growing understanding of the importance of palliative care for patients with illnesses other than cancer. More than half the hospitalisations (56%) were for cancer, leaving 44% to other disease groups.

“Patients with chronic diseases can also benefit from palliative care, which provides pain and symptom management. Far from being just care at the very end of someone’s life, palliative care can work with patients and families over many years to ensure better quality of life.

“Palliative care is truly patient centred care, it is one of the best examples of care as the whole team is working with the patient and their family for the best management of that person’s condition.”

Ms Callaghan said the majority of palliative care was still delivered in hospitals, she hopes future reports from AIHW will show an increase in home and community care.

“Many Australians want to die at home, but they are still dying in hospitals. Families may not know they can care for a loved one at home, or they may not be aware of all that community-based palliative care services can offer them. It is important Australians have conversations early in their lives about what they want at the end of life so families are not overburdened with hard decisions.

“Telling your friends and family where you want to be at the end of your life is one way to start that conversation,” Ms Callaghan said.

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