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Planning for Death

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End-of-life palliative care focuses on patients' comfort and symptom relief, while incorporating spiritual and psychological counseling to help prepare for a good death. Preparing for death may involve drawing up legal documents, such as a will, advanced directives and medical power of attorney as well as making burial plans and planning hospice care.

Hospice

Hospice offers expert end-of-life medical care, including symptom relief, pain management and emotional and spiritual support for patients and their families. The hospice movement in the past decade has drawn attention to the benefits of palliative care, especially through hospice organizations.

Legal Issues

Resolving financial issues and distributing assets through a will can help patients and families focus on matters other than finances. A legal will regulates how a patient's assets should be distributed. Without a will, assets usually fall to the spouse, or if widowed, children and then descendants, but the law varies by state. A living will, often called an advance directive, defines the patient's wishes in regards to prolonging life. A patient designating a medical power of attorney will allow someone to make medical decisions in the event the patient is unable to communicate his or her own wishes.

Burial Plans

Choosing burial, cremation or entombment before death can often alleviate family members of the burden of funeral decisions and budget constraints. Funeral expenses often reach thousands of dollars and emotional overspending is common during grief. By law, funeral directors are required to provide a price list for services in person or over the phone. Details concerning burial location, funeral services and provider as well as any prepayments should be put in writing and discussed with family members.