

What can I expect from the supportive care team?

Symptom management: Expertise in treating one or more symptoms such as pain, fatigue, constipation, weight loss, weakness, shortness of breath and difficulty sleeping, as well as mental or emotional symptoms such as confusion, depression and anxiety.

Supportive counseling: Supportive care specialists communicate clearly and compassionately. Social workers, nurse counselors and chaplains support our physicians and nurses in providing counseling services.

Advance care planning: Since outcomes of treatment can be unpredictable, we offer assistance to patients and their families when they seek more information about coping with issues surrounding disease progression. Our goal is to assist in making informed preparations. When appropriate, we offer in-depth knowledge regarding end-of-life resources, and provide assistance in finding and coordinating care with community services.

Strong support throughout all stages of illness: Whether patients are seeking a cure or focusing on improving the quality of the balance of their lives, the symptom control and palliative care team offers significant physical and emotional support to patients and their families.



To make a referral

An M. D. Anderson medical service can submit an online consultation request to the Supportive Care Center.

For more information, contact the center at (713) 792-6072.

An inpatient or mobile team referral can be made by calling the team at (713) 404-1275.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
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CANCER CENTER
Making Cancer History[®]

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Supportive Care

Caring for Life

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What is supportive care?

Supportive care is a health care specialty focused on improving the quality of life for patients and their families by reducing the physical and emotional burdens of illness, through expert use of:

- symptom management
- supportive counseling
- advance care planning



Is there an appropriate time to receive supportive care services?

Patients can be referred to supportive care at any time. A common misperception is that supportive care is offered only for patients who are ending curative treatment. The National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship and the American Cancer Society encourage physicians to refer patients for supportive services near the time of cancer diagnosis and to incorporate these services throughout all stages of treatment, including curative treatment. This approach is called comprehensive care or simultaneous care.

Why specialty care? Don't all doctors and nurses know how to treat symptoms?

While most physicians and nurses working in cancer care have a solid understanding of symptom management, many cancer patients have multiple symptoms or a single difficult symptom that requires an interdisciplinary approach and specialized expertise. Supportive care interdisciplinary team members are experts in this specialized area of medicine and, through research, are pioneering new approaches to effective treatment. By working closely with the primary care team, supportive specialists often stabilize and strengthen patients. At times, this advantage of receiving the most sophisticated symptom management allows a patient to continue with his or her current treatment plan.

Where are supportive care services offered at M. D. Anderson?

Outpatient

The Supportive Care Center provides outpatient supportive services. The center, which is located in the Main Building (R5.2201 by Elevator C), also provides services by Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation physicians and Integrative Medicine physicians.

Mobile consulting team

This team provides consulting and follow-up services to inpatients throughout M. D. Anderson, as well as to pediatric outpatients and inpatients. It provides support to the primary team but does not serve as the attending physician in this situation.

Inpatient

The Acute Palliative Care Unit is designed to help patients with severe physical and emotional distress, as well as to assist with transitioning goals of care. The palliative physician is the attending physician for this episode of care.

What type of training do supportive physicians have?

Supportive physicians have completed advanced training in one of several fields, including oncology, internal medicine, anesthesiology, gerontology or family practice. At M. D. Anderson, we offer an additional year of specialized training through a medical fellowship program in palliative care.