

HealthPoint

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Dr. John Turski discusses hospice at WCCH

Most of you can identify hearing hospice care described as “a death sentence,” “giving up” or that “nothing more can be done.” As the medical director of Hospice of Southwest Virginia, I would offer the explanation that if people understood hospice better they wouldn’t be so afraid of it. Of course, not many folks look forward to coming to the end of life’s journey. But most people are more fearful of the process of dying than of death itself.

I came to Hospice of Southwest Virginia six and a half years ago as the Medical Director and consider this my “job of a lifetime.” In my role, I feel fortunate to work with a talented and compassionate team of nurses, aides, social workers, chaplains, and other support staff who are some of the warmest and most loving professionals I have ever met. Although I spend most days providing home visits to Hospice patients, many people in our community know me from my part-time work at Wythe County Community Hospital’s Emergency Department, where I have worked for 19 years. Others may have seen my wife and our many children out in the community.

Because of my work with hospice, I am very passionate about changing the public opinion of hospice and want to take this opportunity to discuss some myths and truths about hospice care in our community.

Hospice is a set of services that we all may need someday – if not for ourselves, for someone in our family or friend group. While death is not a choice we would typically make for ourselves, we do have choices about the services we use at the end of life. Hospice is undoubtedly the best option in the last months of life because it offers a whole variety of

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benefits, not only to those of us who are dying, but also to those we leave behind. We also provide emotional and grief support to families for one year after their loved one dies.

Hospice care is not only for those dying immediately or with cancer or AIDS. Hospice care is an option for anyone facing a serious illness and who expects their life to end within six months. For those who choose hospice, their health situation is re-assessed often and they may choose to leave hospice if they improve considerably, but are not automatically discharged if they live beyond those 6 months. Many patients at Hospice of Southwest Virginia have severe lung disease, heart disease or congestive heart failure, Parkinson's Disease, dementia, and other problems, including cancer. An individual facing any one of these diseases may have unmanaged symptoms (such as shortness of breath, pain, or decreased quality of life) therefore, hospice care may be an option. Pain management is of particular concern for a patient with a life-threatening illness. Hospice staff are experts in state-of-the-art pain treatments, helping patients feel comfortable with pain management alternatives.

Hospice is not just for the elderly. Many of our patients are Medicare age – but not all. Those with Medicare or Medicaid find that 100% of their expenses related to their terminal illness are covered. Most private insurances pay for hospice in a similar manner. Hospice of Southwest Virginia doesn't turn anyone away regardless of their insurance coverage or ability to pay.

Hospice care can be provided anywhere! Most of our families that we have served during the years find, that despite their doubts, they can care for a seriously ill loved one at home with the help of our team at Hospice of Southwest Virginia. It is our job to educate and prepare them – teaching medication administration, personal care techniques, symptom control, and medical equipment operation are just some of the things our families learn on a daily basis. I'm sure sometimes they feel like we're training them to be a doctor or a nurse. Family members usually gain incredible confidence in their ability to provide care for their loved one at home. Families often feel that caring for a loved one at home is too difficult, so the best choice for

their family is for the patient to live in a skilled nursing facility or assisted living facility.

Hospice care can be provided in these settings and is in addition to care provided by full-time staff at the facility. Hospice patients occasionally receive care in a hospital if they need symptom control or the caregivers need a break from providing care in the home. Regardless of the living situation for people in Wythe, Smyth, Bland and surrounding counties, hospice care is available.

Hospice patients direct their care. I tell all our patients that we are a team, and they are in charge of their team. As the medical director, I give them advice, provide the medical orders, and I am constantly available to be sure their symptoms are controlled. Under hospice provisions patients keep their regular doctor if they want, and as medical director, I am an added resource. We work side-by-side. Each patient has a special registered nurse case manager who knows them best. Those case managers communicate with the patient's doctor and myself to help patients during their time of need. Hospice seeks to neither speed up death or prolong life. Our hospice's focus is on comfort and quality of life for however long a person lives.

Admission to hospice services requires that a doctor certify the patient has a life-limiting illness, but anyone can contact Hospice of Southwest Virginia to refer someone or to refer themselves. While those affected by terminal illness may struggle to come to terms with death, trained hospice staff gently helps them to find their way at their own speed. Our hospice staff welcomes questions from families who are unsure about their needs and preferences. Our staff is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week to discuss all options and to help families make decisions.

In my daily role as the medical director of Hospice of Southwest Virginia, I am honored to meet and become closely involved with patients and families from every walk of life in every imaginable situation. I am sure it is the job I've been preparing to do for all my life. Some days this job is sad or emotionally difficult, but I truly begin each day excited about what I am going to be able to do. I end most days feeling blessed by the people I've been able to touch and help.

Need a family doctor? Seeking a specialist?



When you need a doctor, where do you start? Finding the right doctor is one of the most important things you will do for yourself and your family.

Now you have one number connecting you to our experienced medical staff and healthcare services.

Wythe County Community Hospital offers:

Cardiology, Diabetes Education Program, Ear, Nose & Throat, General Surgery, Family Medicine, Orthopedics, Pediatrics, Physical Therapy, Sleep Center, Ophthalmology, OB/GYN and much more!

**Call Today and Find the
Expert Care You Need!**

(800) 424-DOCS (3627)

Maintaining Healthy *Oral Care*



Wythe County Community Hospital wants you to know poor oral health and untreated oral diseases can have a significant impact on quality of life. Recent reports indicate a relationship between periodontal (gum) diseases and stroke, heart disease and pre-term low birth weight babies. More than 90% of all systemic diseases have oral manifestation, meaning your dentist may be the first health care provider to diagnose a potential problem.

Poor Oral Health

- 75% of the world's population are affected by some form of periodontal disease or gingivitis
- Infections in the mouth can affect major organs
- Poor mouth care can lead to oral cancer
- Oral cancer claims more lives yearly than cervical or skin cancer
- Poor oral health affects digestion, and ultimately can lead to intestinal failure, IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) and other problems
- Oral examination can diagnose many diseases

Wythe County Community Hospital recommends specific practices to improve oral health. A focus on prevention may help to reduce the overall need for treatment, reduce costs and improve quality of life.

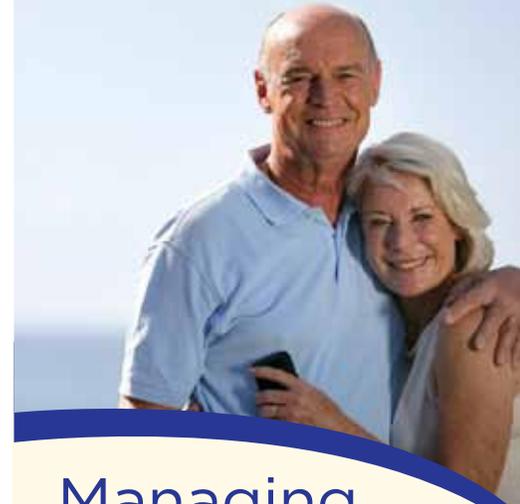
How Do I Practice Good Oral Hygiene?

- Use an antimicrobial (germ killing) mouth rinse twice a day to reduce plaque and prevent gingivitis – an early stage of gum disease caused by the buildup of plaque
- Brush and floss regularly after breakfast and before bed, a minimum of twice a day
- Fluoride rinse minimum twice a day
- Schedule dental cleaning and checkups twice a year
- Avoid tobacco products
- Protect your mouth and skin (call the doctor if you have an open cut, sore or skin infection that does not heal properly)

Who Can Perform Oral Care?

- Patients
- Trained Support Staff
- Nurses
- Trained Family Members

Portions of content provided by the American Dental Association (ADA), the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA).



Managing Congestive Heart Failure

Heart failure, often called Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), occurs when the heart is unable to pump enough blood to meet your body's needs. Heart failure can cause a number of symptoms including shortness of breath, leg swelling and exercise intolerance. Heart Failure cannot be cured, but through proper education and certain lifestyle changes such as routinely visiting your doctor, exercising, reducing salt intake and managing stress, it is possible to improve your quality of life and live many more productive years.

Wythe County Community Hospital is here to help.

Please join us for an informative seminar designed to help manage Congestive Heart Failure.

Attend a seminar and receive a free scale.

Seminar Topics

- Discharge Medications
- Diet Information
- Activity Level Guide
- Weight Monitoring
- Smoking Cessation
- Guidance on Worsening Symptoms

Classes are the 3rd Monday of each month 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. in the Wythe County Community Hospital 1st Floor Classroom

Register for a seminar or get more information by calling Megan Lilly at (276) 228-0298.



Wythe County Community Hospital
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**Important News and Helpful
Advice for a Healthier Life inside:**

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HealthPoint

WYTHE COUNTY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

HealthPoint is published as a community service by Wythe County Community Hospital. It in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. For individual guidance, consult your physician. For more information about Wythe County Community Hospital or anything found in this publication, please call **276-228-0200**.

Expectant parents can expect great things at Wythe County Community Hospital. We understand details make the difference and we take great care in providing you the support you need before, during and after the arrival of your baby. From childbirth classes and private rooms with a sleeper sofa for your spouse or significant support person to a candle lit dinner prior to discharge, the Women's Center at Wythe County Community Hospital provides the level of care, comfort and medical expertise you and your baby need.

The birth of your baby is one of the most significant moments for your family. Choose Wythe County Community Hospital, where every delivery is special.



I'm choosing the
Women's Center
at Wythe County
Community Hospital