



<https://youtu.be/vTWs1JXNHZY>

Living Well with Cancer: Get Palliative Care

A Patient's Story

Rae Anne was at a concert with friends when she found a lump on the side her neck. Worried, she left and scheduled various doctor appointments to figure out what it could be, as she didn't have any other symptoms. Over the course of a few weeks, the lump grew, and she was diagnosed with stage 4 head and neck cancer.

After several rounds of chemotherapy and 35 radiation treatments, Rae Anne was told by her oncology team that she needed to wait at home for 3 months until her next scan, in order to see if the treatment worked. While living with anxiety and side effects from treatment, Rae Anne received a phone call from the palliative care team at the hospital where she received treatment, to schedule an appointment. She had never heard of palliative care and didn't know what to expect.

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. This type of care focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a specially trained team of doctors, nurses and other specialists who work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

Palliative Care Changed Rae Anne's Life

At her first appointment with the palliative care team, Rae Anne felt supported. She was greeted warmly and was asked how she was feeling and how she was coping with the symptoms and side effects of her treatment. At that point, she did not know what was considered "normal" or what she should expect about her symptoms. The team spent over an hour with Rae Anne and her family, answering questions and discussing what was "normal."

Rae Anne remembers, "Palliative care came in and provided me with the monitoring that I needed, and peace of mind that someone was there if I had a question."

She goes on to say, "While the oncology team was there to fix the cancer with quick, methodical conversations, the palliative care team asked how I was feeling, what was going on, helping and guiding through the physical and emotional symptoms. They made suggestions and allowed me to feel that what I was going through was normal and that there was an end in sight."

Not only did the Palliative Care team provide support for Rae Anne, but they were also there for her family, which was important to her. If her children or sister had any questions or needed support in any way, the team was just a phone call away.

"Palliative care was the most valuable part of treatment because it enabled me to feel like I was going to feel better again."

Rae Anne hopes that her story will inspire people living with a serious illness, and their families, to seek out palliative care as soon as possible. She's grateful that the team called when they did, as she's been able to go back to her everyday life with her children and happily run her non-profit work.