

Medicare Plans to Pay Physicians for End-of-Life Care Conversations

At TRU Community Care, we take end-of-life conversations seriously. We believe that through conversation and contemplation, education can occur and the ideals that a person wishes to achieve at the end can be realized. Through talking with a medical provider, one can explore the questions and the fears that may come as we approach the end-of-life.

In July, Medicare announced that doctors will be reimbursed for counseling patients about whether and how they would want to be kept alive if they're too sick to speak for themselves. Up to this point, doctors would not be reimbursed for their time with Medicare recipients discussing options for care and wishes for the end-of-life. Medicare's plan comes as many patients, families, and health care providers are pushing to give people greater say about how they die. Does that mean every medical procedure is tried? Or that life support be discontinued for those who did not want to be sustained by ventilators or feeding tubes? "We think today's proposal supports individuals and families who wish to have the opportunity to discuss advance care planning with their physician and care team," said Dr. Patrick Conway, the chief medical officer for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, which administers Medicare. "We think those discussions are an important part of patient-and family-centered care."

Dr. Conway said a final decision on the proposal would be made by November 1 and take effect in January of 2016. The plan would allow qualified professionals like nurse practitioners and physician assistants, as well as doctors, to be reimbursed for face-to-face meetings with a patient and any relatives or caregivers the patient wants to include. Dr. Conway said the proposal did not limit the number of conversations reimbursed.

Major medical organizations endorsed Medicare's proposal. The National Right to Life Committee opposed it on grounds that it could lead to patients' being pressured to forgo treatment.

The reimbursement rate paid under the proposal and other details will be determined after public comments are received, Dr. Conway said. It's worth noting that people covered by Medicare account for about 80 percent of deaths each year.

Dr. Shirley Huang, Medical Director for TRU Community Care, shared, "The benefit of payment for such advance care planning hopefully will be a financial incentive to encourage health care professionals to actively engage their patients, and families, and surrogates in discussing goals of care and developing a plan. Such a plan would guide medical decisions to honor the patient's wishes and dignity. Of course, in hospice and palliative medicine, advance care planning activity is part of daily patient encounters. But the proposed rule

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TRU welcomes two new physicians to our community

Joining Dr. Shirley Huang, Medical Director, and Dr. Beth Mazzola, team physician, in providing hospice and palliative medicine to our patients and families and direction for our staff are Dr. Laura "Ellie" Hughes and Dr. Paul Wedel.

Dr. Hughes is board certified in Internal Medicine and just recently completed a fellowship in hospice and palliative medicine at Summa Akron City Hospital, Akron, Ohio. Dr. Hughes recently returned to Colorado and will sit for her boards in Hospice and Palliative Medicine in November 2016.

Dr. Wedel is board certified in family medicine and most recently was Assistant Professor Family Medicine, University of Illinois, Rockford, Illinois, and team physician at Heartland Hospice in Rockford. He relocated to Colorado about one year ago.

Both Dr. Hughes and Dr. Wedel take great pride in their work with residents and look forward to working with TRU's clinical staff and their physician colleagues in the community.

TRU is excited to welcome Dr. Hughes and Dr. Wedel.



Dr. Laura "Ellie" Hughes



Dr. Paul Wedel



Dr. Shirley Huang



Dr. Beth Mazzola



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may empower other medical fields to do the same and make it more worthwhile for the health care professional's time. Too often, these discussions come too late and at moments of crisis."

Dr. Huang and the team of practitioners at TRU Community Care and TRU Hospice engage in regular trainings and opportunities for learning – not just about how to have meaningful end of life conversations with families, but how to approach the medical community as a whole about the importance of helping patients to seek quality through to the end.

TRU Hospice Care Center clinical manager, Janice Young, RN, recently described a scene that is a routine occurrence in her world: a woman phoned the care center at 9:30 pm on a Sunday – she was in the hospital with her ex-husband. The gentleman was to be released from the hospital on Monday morning. The woman told us that her ex-husband was "at the end" and needed a place where she could be with him, but also would have support. Janice asked if the man was prepared to be admitted to hospice. The woman was unsure. Not understanding the benefits of hospice, she questioned Janice well into the night over two hours. Later that night, into Monday morning, the woman accepted that hospice and the TRU Hospice Care Center were her best options as the medical power of attorney for her ex-husband. The couple came to the care center by noon on Monday. There, education for the woman continued, as Janice worked to give her the time and attention she needed to "feel sure." Her charge died within three days of admission in a peaceful, comfortable way. The ex-wife was relieved, uplifted and grateful for the amount of time, patience, and even-handed guidance she received from TRU staff. We look forward to the support Medicare would provide for these conversations we're engaged in every day.

TRU makes the time to go above and beyond for all of our patients, sharing information, teaching caregivers, and going the extra mile so that we all might have the chance to reach the end-of-life the way we choose.

"These conversations will be lifesaving, enabling those of us with serious illness to live the way we want to, fully and deeply for as long as possible." - Amy Berman, a nurse with terminal cancer, in a open letter to Medicare advocating reimbursement for advance care planning.

PIZZAZ! 2015 - ANOTHER ROARING SUCCESS!

Our 2015 PIZZAZ! a TRU Speakeasy was an energetic evening filled with spirited games, exciting prizes, and fabulous food and beverages. Thank you to Superior Liquor and Vapor Distillery for their donations, our outstanding sponsors for their underwriting (see trucare.org for a listing), and for the amazing generosity of more than 200 TRU patrons. A fabulous evening was enjoyed by costumed gangsters, flappers and all who bootlegged their way into the roaring '20s. Thank you to all who came to ask "What can I do for TRU?" and responded with gracious generosity. Special thanks to TRU Volunteer Mike Arellano, and TRU Hospice Nurse, Janice Young, for sharing their stories of love and inspiration. Photographs donated by Blue Crane Photography – thank you!

Johnny Harris



Nancy and Tom Dowling



Clay Wyatt and Kimberly Duong



Mark Queripel, Mary Williams, Diana Slough



WELCOME!

Having recently moved from the Pacific Northwest to Colorado, Denise Hendrickson is the newest member of TRU's executive team and brings more than 20 years of nursing experience including teaching and clinical management. While Denise has worked in a variety of settings along the health care continuum, most of her clinical experience has been in acute care and hospice and palliative care. With an interest to successfully implement patient centered health care policies at the organizational and public levels, she received her Master's in Public Administration and moved from the bedside to administration. Since then, Denise has focused on providing quality care for all patients and a positive workplace for all staff, by implementing clinical practices that are patient focused and sustainable.



Denise Hendrickson
RN, MPA
Vice President
Clinical Services

WAYS TO GIVE FOR WHAT TRULY MATTERS

Colorado Gives Day - December 8th

For the 6th year, Community First Foundation and FirstBank are partnering to present Colorado Gives Day (CGD). CGD is an annual statewide movement to celebrate and increase philanthropy in Colorado through online giving. The \$1 Million Incentive Fund created by the partners is one of the largest gives-day incentive funds in the country. Here are the facts: Who: You can give to TRU, When: 24 hours starting at 12 a.m. on Tuesday, December 8, 2015, How: Donate online right here at ColoradoGives.org, or schedule your donation in advance (starting November 2015). Why: To strengthen the state's nonprofits through online giving.



Community Shares of Colorado Payroll Contribution Plan

Community Shares' goal is to broaden charitable choice in workplace giving campaigns for nonprofits. For a growing number of donors, TRU Community Care is on their list! To find out whether your company currently participates, check with your Human Resources department. If you would like information on how to get your company involved, please contact Abigail Smith at abigailsmith@trucare.org.

Matching Gift

Many employers will match a gift to TRU made by an employee or spouse of an employee. Please check with your Human Resource or Personnel Department to see if they will match your gift, obtain their form, and send it to us with your donation.

Vehicle Donation

Convert your unneeded car, truck, RV or motorcycle into funds to help TRU. Call 866-701-2277 or go online to www.carshelpingcharities.org/cobrand/tru-community-care/

Stock Gifts

Each year, many of our committed donors support TRU Community Care with gifts of stock or mutual fund shares, life insurance and/or retirement plan assets. These gifts enable donors to realize tax benefits while receiving the satisfaction of helping TRU. If you own appreciated securities (stocks, bonds or mutual funds held by you for more than one year), donating them to TRU may allow you to reduce or avoid more capital gains taxes and receive a federal income tax charitable deduction.

Bequests

A bequest is a wonderful way for donors to make a significant contribution to TRU Community Care. This thoughtful method of gifting can be created as easily as adding a paragraph to a will. Consider TRU once your family is taken care of and you have the opportunity to consider benefiting a nonprofit organization through your estate. If you have remembered TRU in your Will or Revocable Living Trust, or are planning to, please let us know. We would like to thank you now and invite you to join our Legacy Circle.

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

- Anne Frank

Thrift Shop

Donating to the TRU Hospice Thrift Shop is a good solution whether you're performing your year-round spring cleaning, downsizing or simply purging. Visit trucare.org/boulder-thrift-shop for our guide to items we accept. Proceeds from the Thrift Shop make it possible for us to provide our compassionate care to everyone in the community who needs it – become a donor and shopper today.

For more information about contributing to TRU Community Care, contact Annette Mainland at 303-604-5261.



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To view newsletter online or sign up to receive by email go to TruCare.org



VOLUNTEER VOICE

Mike Arellano volunteers at TRU Hospice to pay forward the remarkable people in his life. His Fire Service career was about doing things to prevent, save and protect. "My Hospice service is about the simple art of celebrating life." For the most part, Mike gets to spend time with patients during the best part of their day. "I'm a link in the chain of Hospice support that includes the physicians, nurses, social workers, and chaplains. The really beautiful thing that hospice does is create time so that a patient's accumulated wisdom, knowledge, humor and love can be passed on to people." He continually marvels at the beautiful, full lives they've led and his own to-do list grows longer with every patient he visits. He has yet to take a train ride to Glenwood Springs, cook a decent French dinner, produce a wood carving, and hike the Woody Creek Trail in Aspen. To Mike, "Those who are in the final chapters of their life seem intent on making sure I live my life more fully."

He was especially moved by Bob, an accomplished painter. In the time they had together, Bob told him the stories behind each work of art. His very last painting was a three-canvas painting of the mountains in late fall. It became important to him that this particular painting be completed and they had talked a lot about how to frame it - a traditional frame just didn't seem right. "For me, this took on an added sense of urgency. The windows where Bob felt good enough to finish it were starting to get shorter." On what was to be Mike's last visit, he found Bob standing in front of his painting. He had framed it with the limbs of an Aspen tree. "It was perfect, unconventional, and completed the painting in a way that was uniquely Bob. I will never forget the look on Bob's face. It was perfect and he knew it."

"I give a heartfelt thanks to TRU Hospice for giving me the opportunity to help celebrate a lot of lives just like Bob's."

Go to www.trucare.org/careers-volunteers/volunteer-overview/ for information about volunteering with TRU Community Care.



Mike Arellano

"Those who are in the final chapters of their life seem intent on making sure I live my life more fully."