The word “hospice” evokes a multitude of responses from different people.

For some, health declines occur rapidly and the decision for hospice is made quickly. For others, changes in condition may happen over the course of time.

When should a patient or family consider hospice? According to a 2015 report by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), approximately 40 percent of those enrolled in hospice services received those services for 14 days or less. Individuals may be waiting until the last days to choose this care, even though they would qualify weeks or months earlier.

November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month. The 2018 theme is “It’s about How You Live.”

According to the NHPCO, hospice and palliative care programs across the country are reaching out to raise awareness. Hospice is not a place but high-quality care that enables patients and families to focus on living as fully as possible despite a life-limiting illness. Palliative care brings a holistic model of care to people earlier in the course of a serious illness.

“Every year, nearly 1.4 million people living with a life-limiting illness receive care from hospices in this country,” Edo Banach, president and CEO of NHPCO, said. “These highly trained professionals ensure that patients and families find dignity, respect and love during life’s most difficult journey.”

If hospice is the answer, how can patients and their family find the best hospice in Johnson County? Many times the patient or family may receive recommendations from their physician. Friends and neighbors may also know of hospice companies and the care provided.

To obtain the most accurate and unbiased information on any hospice, the patient or family can use Hospice Compare. It is a website sponsored by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that offers a list of hospice providers by location and also details about that hospice. There is a comparison format so that prospective patients and their families can evaluate the available hospices based on results of family care surveys.

Hospice Compare offers basic information and provides a checklist to assist in assessing hospices compared to one another and compared to national averages. Meeting with members of the hospice team will also provide valuable insight into the care that one may expect. It might be important to your family to utilize a non-profit company as opposed to a for-profit company. Other families may look for a specific religious affiliation.

When meeting the team, questions might include:

- “How long has this hospice company been in operation?”
- “What happens if we need a nurse at 2 a.m.?”
- “What is your nurse to patient ratio?”
- “What sort of bereavement services are offered after our loved one has passed?”

As with many decisions in life, the decision for hospice is a deeply personal one. Patients and their loved ones often make this choice at an unexpected time or a time of crisis. Taking the time to do a bit of research can make choosing a care team easier. Also, if the first choice of hospice is not a good fit, the hospice patient has a right to change to a different hospice at any time.

Find out more about your local hospice companies at medicare.gov/hospicecompare/.

Article provided by Evergreen Hospice Care, a division of the Evergreen Community of Johnson County.

“Absolutely the No.1 show in the world.”
—Kenn Wells, former lead dancer of the English National Ballet

“There is a massive power in this that can embrace the world. It brings great hope... It is truly a touch of heaven.”
—Daniel Herman, former Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic

Jan 25–27
Kauffman Center
Feb 12
Lied Center of Kansas
913-701-SHOW • ShenYun.com

www.jocogov.org/thebesttimes • 9 • Nov-Dec 2018