



Hospice Case Study: Veterans Care

For patients who are Veterans, our teams provide customized plans of care and palliation for optimal outcomes, with focus on clinical interventions for patient comfort, education and support for caregivers, and hospitalization reduction.

Mr. C was a 70 year old male admitted to hospice with late-stage Alzheimer's with PTSD, mood disorder, osteoarthritis, bipolar disorder, insomnia, and a history of falls with right hip replacement. Patient is a Vietnam Veteran.

Mr. C was admitted to a nursing home facility following ankle surgery and exhibited progressive decline. He was alert to name but disoriented to time and place. Behaviors previously resulted in two extended stays in a behavior unit and Mr. C was being evaluated for a 3rd inpatient stay when hospice became involved. Each previous stay reported increased patient decline and aggressive behaviors despite medication changes.

Patient experienced increased sleep disturbances with night terrors, decline of appetite, pocketing food, difficulty swallowing resulting in 35% weight loss in four months, and BMI decrease from 28.4 to 18.4. He was anorexic and had history of UTIs. He required assistance with 5/6 ADLs as patient could feed himself. Patient had what was termed "auditory and visual hallucinations."

Mr. C spent his senior year of high school as an Army Medic in the jungles of Vietnam, dodging bullets and incoming mortar as he ran towards the horrors of battle to save his fallen comrades. He came back to the states, fought those memories with alcohol and drug abuse for several years, eventually choosing sobriety and becoming a mental health counselor. He was diagnosed with combat-related PTSD.

The agency providing hospice care is a Level 5 participant with the national We Honor Veterans program. The hospice team began education with the nursing home staff and patient's family on Soul Injury® and the Anchoring Heart Technique (AHT). Education included the knowledge that behaviors thought to be related to Alzheimer's could be attributed to a Veteran whose dementia had him "reliving" his days in jungle warfare. Our Veteran was trying to "complete his mission of saving his comrades at all cost" while his own body was failing. The emotional feeling of helplessness most likely triggered the patient's downward decline.

Daily hospice care, including Chaplain and Social Worker visits, established relationship with Mr. C leading to acknowledgement and identification of unresolved issues. The Anchoring Heart Technique was reported to be quite effective during several episodes of flashbacks, agitation, and discomfort.

When Mr. C passed away peacefully, The Final Salute was performed by members of the hospice team. The Final Salute formally recognizes and honors Veteran patients for their service at their end of life by the ceremonial draping of the American Flag over the body. Our Veterans leave their home and travel to the funeral home draped under the American Flag for which they sacrificed.

Contact us to begin the hospice conversation or to address specific questions regarding hospice care for our Veteran patients. We Are Here.

Our Care Matters

- Mr. C's hospice care was provided in the nursing home where he lived
- Family education led to improved patient outcomes with comfort measures
- Facility staff education on dementia in a Veteran patient improved understanding of agitation and exacerbations
- Insight and understanding of Veteran issues allowed this patient to spend his last days in his home versus an inpatient psychiatric unit

When Life Matters Most

- Interventions through emotional and spiritual support provided identification and addressing of unresolved issues
- Adjustments in medications offered better efficacy for management of anxiety due to PTSD and/or Soul Injury
- Our Veteran was able to pass with dignity and understanding
- The family was able to have some closure due to the probable "cause" of their loved one's behaviors
- Our Veteran received honor and the "Final Salute" for his service to our nation