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 UTI's. 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.