

NEW RESOURCE COMBATS HEART FAILURE

Program will improve quality and access to hospice and palliative care for heart patients and keep them from dying alone in hospitals

HUNT VALLEY, Md., May 3, 2021

Gilchrist, in collaboration with the American Heart Association (AHA) and the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI), today announces the Advanced Cardiac Care (ACC) Program to address one of the nation's largest killers of Americans – heart disease.

Available for immediate use, the program's patient and caregiver guide helps avert multiple hospital and emergency room visits that are a huge source of stress for the patient, their family, and the medical facility currently dealing with COVID-19 patients.

Each year, more Americans die from heart disease than any other condition, including cancer. Heart disease is also a leading cause for hospitalization: patients with congestive heart failure alone account for more than one million inpatient admissions annually. Although heart patients are at higher risk of complications and death, they are more likely to underuse hospice care options.

"We find that patients with heart disease fare better, have improved quality of life and avoid hospitalizations when they receive coordinated, high-quality medical care at home earlier in the course of their illness," said Catherine Hamel, President of Gilchrist. "However, many patients enter hospice only a few days before death, which is not enough time to receive the full benefit of hospice services. We are committed to working with NPHI, AHA and other leading advanced illness organizations to improve care for these individuals, who often fall through the cracks of the health system."

Carole Fisher, President of NPHI, remarked, "It is a complete and unnecessary tragedy that only five percent of heart failure patients who are discharged from the hospital ever utilize in-home hospice services." She further stated, "Far too many die alone in a hospital or nursing facility, when instead our hospice teams could care for them wherever they reside and they could enjoy a far higher quality of life surrounded by loved ones."

NPHI is the national voice for 75 not-for-profit hospice and advanced illness care providers. NPHI's hospice and advanced illness care providers offer primary medical and lifestyle care at home, even for those heart failure patients who are not terminal.

Heart disease will likely continue to have a disproportionate toll on many traditionally underserved groups who have higher rates of heart disease and associated risk factors. Commenting on this recognized gap, Dr. Cameron Muir, chief innovation officer of NPHI mentioned, "Far too many people

of color and LGBTQ+ advanced heart disease patients are not made aware of how NPHI member organizations can provide comprehensive quality care at-home care which is covered by Medicare or private insurance or by our NPHI members; no one is turned away because they cannot pay.” Dr. Muir continued, “Through the collaboration, the clinical protocols and patient/family resources will advance care and improve quality of life for those facing advanced heart disease.”

Together with national and community partners, Gilchrist is committed to improving care quality and access for individuals with cardiac disease. Copies of the Patient and Caregiver guide may be downloaded at www.gilchristcares.org/advanced-cardiac-care. To request a print copy or for information about the Advanced Cardiac Care Program, please call 443.849.8425.

Additional Resources:

- [Palliative Care and Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke: A Policy Statement from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association](#)

About Gilchrist

Gilchrist is a nationally recognized nonprofit leader in serious illness and end-of-life care. With elder medical care, counseling and hospice, we help people at every stage of serious illness live life to the fullest and make informed choices about their care. Since 1994, the organization has served thousands of individuals throughout Central Maryland—in homes, in skilled nursing and residential care communities, and at our three inpatient hospice centers in Towson, Howard County and Baltimore. Gilchrist is accredited by CHAP (Community Health Accreditation Partner), is a recipient of the Circle of Life award from the American Hospital Association, and is part of GBMC HealthCare, which received the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award in 2020. For more information about Gilchrist, visit www.gilchristcares.org.

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