Through the efforts of volunteers, No One Dies Alone provides a reassuring presence to dying patients who would otherwise be alone.

With the support of Hoag Hospital’s Palliative Care team, Spiritual Care team, Nursing staff and trained volunteers, compassionate companions offer patients the most valuable of human gifts: a dignified death.
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Background

No one is born alone, and in the best of circumstances, no one dies alone. Yet, from time to time terminally ill patients come to Hoag who have neither family nor close friends to be with them as they near the end of life. Why should these people die without companionship? How can we, as a hospital, step in to provide dignity at the end of life? The answer is simple, we must do our best to ensure that No One Dies Alone.

No One Dies Alone was created at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, Oregon when a nurse caring for a dying patient was unable to fulfill that patient’s dying wish: that he not die alone. The patient had requested that she stay at his bedside, but she had to step away to check on her other six patients; when she returned to his bedside, the patient had died. This nurse, Sandra Clarke CCRN, worked together with the spiritual care department at Sacred Heart and created the very first No One Dies Alone Program.

No One Dies Alone is a volunteer program that provides the reassuring presence of a volunteer companion to dying patients who would otherwise be alone. This companionship offers patients the most valuable of human gifts: a dignified death.

Facilitated by Hoag’s Palliative Care Team, the program utilizes Hoag employees to fulfill these compassionate companion positions. Training is provided, and volunteers then choose the time, date and number of hours that he or she will be available.

How does this actually work?

A staff nurse or social worker will notify the charge nurse of a patient who has no friends or family, is on the Comfort Care Pathway and is in the dying process. The charge nurse will then contact the No One Dies Alone Coordinator and every attempt will be made to find a companion to sit vigil with the patient.

The expectation is simple: quiet reading, or perhaps holding a hand. Being present is the most important thing. As the CEO of Sacred Heart Medical Center stated, “we create moments of grace in a world that does not expect kindness.” At Hoag Hospital, our goal is that No One Die Alone.
The Dying Person’s Bill Of Rights

- I have the right to be treated as a living human being until I die.
- I have the right to maintain a sense of hopefulness, however its focus may change.
- I have the right to be cared for by those who can maintain a sense of hopefulness, however its focus may change.
- I have the right to express my feelings and emotions about my approaching death in my own way.
- I have the right to participate in decisions concerning my care.
- I have the right to expect continuing medical and nursing attention even if “cure” goals must be changed to “comfort” goals.
- I have the right not to die alone.
- I have the right to be free from pain.
- I have the right to have my questions answered honestly.
- I have the right not to be deceived.
- I have the right to have help from and for my family in accepting my death.
- I have the right to die in peace and with dignity.
- I have the right to retain my individuality and not to be judged for my decisions, which maybe contrary to the beliefs of others.
- I have the right to discuss and enlarge my religious and spiritual experiences, regardless of what they mean to others.
- I have the right to be cared for by caring, sensitive, knowledgeable people who will try to understand my needs and will be able to gain some satisfaction in helping me face my death.

This Bill of Rights was created at a workshop on “the Terminally Ill Patient and the Helping Person” in Lansing Michigan, sponsored by the Southwestern Michigan Inservice Education Council and conducted by Amelia J. Barbus, associate professor of nursing, Wayne State University, in 1975.
Comfort

You want your companion to pass from this world in peace and comfort. How will you know if he or she requires nursing assistance to achieve this goal?

- Winces when moved
- Moans
- Holds body tense and stiff
- Breathing is labored
- Restless or agitated.

Things You Can Do To Help Make Your Companion More Comfortable

- Play soothing music
- Bring favorite poems, stories
- Don’t be afraid to be yourself - cry, laugh, carry on conversations, read, eat
- Remember hearing and touch are the two senses that remain until death
- Your companion will feel comforted by your presence
- You may adjust pillows, moisten lips, add or subtract blankets, adjust the room temperature as you think beneficial for your companion
- You should call nursing staff, using the call light, if you feel your companion is in pain is uncomfortable or is anxious.
- You may wish to give your companion “permission” to go to the light or beyond this existence.
How You Will Know That Your Companion Has Died

- The person will have no pulse or heartbeat.
- The person will not breathe.
- The person will not respond to your voice.
- The eyelids may be slightly open and the eyes fixed.
- The jaw may be relaxed.

Please feel free to stay with your patient-companion for awhile. Call the nurse if you need assistance.
Let Me Die Laughing

We are all dying, our lives always moving toward completion.

We need to learn to live with death, and to understand

That death is not the worst of all events.

We need to fear not death, but life-
empty lives,
loveless lives.

lives that do not build upon the gifts that each of us has been given,
lives that are like living deaths,
lives which we never take the time to savor and appreciate,
lives in which we never pause to breathe deeply.

What we need to fear is not death, but squandering the lives we have been miraculously given.

So let me die laughing, savoring life’s crazy moments. Let me die holding the hand of one I love, and recalling that I tried to love and was loved in return. Let me die remembering that life has been good, and that I did what I could. But today, just remind me that I am dying, so that I can live, savor and love with all my heart.

— Mark Morrison-Reed
An Old Ladies Poem

What do you see nurse, what do you see?
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?
A crabby old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes?
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply
When you say in a loud voice, “I do wish you'd try!”
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe...
Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill....
Is that what you're Thinking? Is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse; you're not looking at me.
I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,
As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child often...with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters, who love one another,
Young girl of sixteen, with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.
A bride soon, at twenty-my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promise to keep.
At twenty-five now, I have young of my Own,
who need me to guide and a secure happy home.
A woman of thirty, my young now grown fast.
Bound to each other with ties that should last.
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.
Fifty once more, babies play around my knee,
Again we know children, my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead;
I look at the future, I shutter with dread;
For my young are all rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.
I'm now an old woman...and nature is cruel;
Is jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigor depart,
There is now a stone where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,
And now and again my battered heart swells
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living life over again.
I think of the years...all too few, gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, nurses open and see...
Not a crabby old woman; look closer...
See Me!

– Anonymous

Remember this poem when you next meet an old person whom you might-brush aside without looking at the young soul within.
We will one day be there, too!
The Ship

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.

She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she is only a speck of white cloud jut where the sea and sky meet and mingle with each other. The someone at my side exclaims, “There, she's gone!”

Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all She is just as large in hull and mast and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her.

And just at the moment when someone at my side says “She’s gone,” there are other eyes watching out for her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, “There, she come!”

And that is dying.

– Anonymous
INFORMATION AND DIRECTIONS

Compassionate Companion
Volunteer Agreement

NAME: ___________________________________________________

ADDRESS: ___________________________________________________________________

CITY: _________________________________________________________________________

PHONE: Home: _______________________________

Work: _______________________________

Cell: _______________________________

E-MAIL ADDRESS: __________________________________________

HOAG HOSPITAL: EMPLOYEE □

VOLUNTEER □

LAST DATE OF TB TEST: ___________________________

I, the undersigned, understand that I am offering my services as a Compassionate Companion in the role of volunteer. I will not receive or expect financial compensation for my time. I understand I am in no way acting in my roles as an employee of Hoag Hospital. I will not perform or assist in any usual and customary patient care done by medical personnel. If the date and time I have chosen has no need for a “Compassionate Companion”, my obligation is finished.

Signature________________________________ Date ____________

No One Dies Alone
Companion Evaluation

Unit: ___________________________ Date: _______________ Time: _______________

1. Were you notified in a timely manner? ________________________________

2. Did the staff make you feel welcome? Comfortable? ________________________________

3. When you arrived did the patient appear comfortable?
   ____________________________________________________________________________

4. If you had any questions and/or concerns regarding the patient, did the staff address
   them satisfactorily? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

5. Did you feel you were prepared for your role as a companion once you arrived at the bedside?
   ____________________________________________________________________________

6. What could be done to improve the role of companion? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

7. Was this a valuable experience? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

Would you be interested in doing this again? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

Any Further comments or suggestions: ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

- Please submit completed form to your Charge Nurse
- Charge Nurse: Please forward to the No One Dies Alone Coordinator
Staff Evaluation of Compassionate Companion

Unit: ___________________ Date: ______________ Time: ______________

1. Was the companion notified in a timely manner? ________________________________

2. Did the companion arrive in a timely manner? ________________________________

3. Did the companion seem prepared to accept his/her role with the dying patient?
   ___________________________________________________________________________

4. Did the presence of the companion help your ability to care for the patient? __________
   How? _______________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

5. Did the presence of the companion hinder your ability to care for the patient? __________
   How? _______________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

6. What could be done to improve this service for future patients? ___________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

7. What could be done to improve this service for the staff? ________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

Any Further comments or suggestions: ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

- Please submit completed form to your Charge Nurse
- Charge Nurse: Please forward to the No One Dies Alone Coordinator
Compassionate Companion Volunteer Guide

1. Sign up on the WAVE, or call the No One Dies Alone Coordinator at (949/764-1931). You will receive a reminder call, via e-mail or phone, a few days prior to your week. Please read and respond to this reminder. This assures the phone coordinator of your confirmed commitment to act as a compassionate companion. This message may contain program updates. The reply gives you the opportunity to give the phone coordinator modifications in your availability for the coming week. If there are no changes, simply reply with “received” or “I got it.”

2. You may or may not receive a call during your week, depending upon patient need. At week’s end you will receive an e-mail about No One Dies Alone’s activities, if any, over the past week.

3. Should the need for a volunteer companion occur, the phone coordinator will start to make calls from the current week’s list of volunteers, according to their stated availability.

4. If the phone coordinator encounters problems reaching volunteers or the need for volunteers is greater than usual (i.e. multiple patients, or a longer-than-usual vigil), calls will be made using the master list (to those who have indicated they can be called at any time, including unscheduled weeks).

5. If you are called and you agree to come in, you will be provided with the following information: patient name, room number and room phone number, nursing unit and unit phone number, current condition of the patient (including whether the patient is in isolation), and information about volunteers coming before or after you (so you know whether you need to pick up the supply bag or return it to its base location when you leave).

6. COMPASSIONATE COMPANION SUPPLY BAG You may pick up a compassionate companion supply bag from the Security Desk, near admitting, on the first floor of the East Tower (Women’s Pavilion). This area should be accessible 24 hours a day. If you have any difficulty, please page the No One Dies Alone Coordinator at long range pager #28273.

7. MEALS If you need food or drink during a vigil, please notify the Charge RN and request via Comfort Food Service.

8. PARKING Please park in the South Parking Structure. If you need an escort to your car after hours, please contact Security.

9. COMPASSIONATE COMPANION NAME BADGE You will receive a Compassionate Companion name badge upon completion of your training. Please wear it all times during a vigil to identify your role as a volunteer.

10. Please call the nursing unit before you come to the hospital, the patient may have died or a family member may have arrived.
11. Upon your arrival, introduce yourself to the staff (mainly the charge nurse and the patient’s primary nurse). They should be expecting you if you were asked to come in.

12. Once you are in the patient’s room, you assume the role of a compassionate companion. If you have any questions about the patient, ask the nurse. Have the staff call Spiritual Care if the patient has any spiritual needs.

13. During the vigil, simply be yourself. Treat the patient as you would one of your own friends or family members, with respect for the patient's individuality. Whatever your own beliefs, allow the patient to initiate any religious behavior rather than initiating it yourself.

14. If the phone rings, answer it and respond appropriately.

15. If family arrives, you should exit as quietly and gracefully as possible. Simply say “I was keeping [patient’s name] company until you could arrive.” Inform the primary RN and Charge RN first, then let the No One Dies Alone Coordinator know of this development via voicemail 949/764-1931.

16. Before you leave the nursing unit, please fill out the Companion Evaluation (found in the NODA supply bag) and give it to the primary or charge nurse.

17. Call the No One Dies Alone Coordinator at ext. 41931 if the patient dies while you are present. If after hours please leave a message.

18. If you are not expecting another companion to follow you, please return the supply bag to its original location before you leave.
Activation Guidelines

No One Dies Alone is a Hoag Hospital program supported by employees and volunteers. The following criteria and questions will help you to assess when and for whom this special program is intended. Please know that every effort will be made to respond patient needs within volunteer availability. We appreciate and welcome your involvement in this important work of compassion.

CRITERIA

No One Dies Alone is for patients who are on the comfort care pathway, are on DNR status and are expected to die within 48-72 hours. If your patient meets these criteria, ask the following two questions:

☐ Does this patient have family or friends who live locally?
   If not, activate No One Dies Alone.

☐ Are family and friends involved and present?
   If not, activate No One Dies Alone.

ACTIVATION

Weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. -- Contact the No One Dies Alone Coordinator via long range pager #28273

Evenings, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. and Weekends -- Contact the No One Dies Alone Coordinator through the hospital operator (or pager #28273)