The Role of a Hospice Chaplain

A Hospice Chaplain is available to patients and families on hospice without cost or obligation to them. They provide emotional, spiritual, and personal support to help with coping during the hospice journey. Here are seven things to know about the role of the hospice chaplain:

1) Provide Emotional Support - Hospice chaplains are listeners who offer a caring presence. They help patients and families talk about their fears, worries, and feelings without judgement or criticism. Generally speaking, a hospice chaplain provides encouragement during a difficult time.

2) Supports Spiritual Needs - Hospice chaplains do not proselytize or promote any one brand of religion. They offer navigation of spiritual crises, and support based on the patient's beliefs and values. Chaplains are trained to support various faiths and those with no religious beliefs at all. They respect all faith backgrounds and care for people of all levels of religious affiliations.

3) Help with Difficult Conversations - Hospice chaplains can help with bringing clarity to conversations about illness, dying, and what matters most to the patient and family. They offer a safe listening ear and non-judgmental space to talk and be heard. They offer understanding of feelings shared by the patient to the family or family to the patient.

4) Bring Comfort and Calm - Hospice chaplains provide hope, reassurance, and a sense of peace through their spiritual presence and requested religious practices. They can offer prayer on a regular basis or at the end of life transition. They help with feelings of anxiety, loneliness, or fear.

5) Support the Whole Family - Hospice chaplains are available to family members and caregivers, not just the patient. They offer grief support before and after a loved one's passing. They help families navigate the emotional and spiritual challenges of going through the hospice journey.

6) Part of the Hospice Team - Hospice chaplains work closely with the nurse, aide, social worker, physician, and other team members. They bring understanding to the team regarding the patient and family that encourages personalized and respectful care. Their goal is to provide support to the team, as well.

7) Chaplain Availability - Hospice chaplains typically visit at the beginning of a hospice admission in order to assess any needs and to make an introduction with patients and family. A visit from the hospice chaplain can be declined by the patient or family at admissions but it can also be requested at any point along the hospice journey before the patient passes. If the patient or family has a pastor through their local church membership, a hospice chaplain can still be productive in their visit because of their specialty training and regular availability. A hospice chaplain is available and ready to help whenever you request.