

Dear Editor,

With the revolution of all Healthcare services on the horizon, it benefits us all to remain well informed and educated on all aspects of healthcare. Therefore, we would like to pose the following questions to your readers.

Are you aware of the imminent sale of the Certified Home Health (CHHA) and do you know the difference between services rendered by Hospice and a CHHA?

Hospice provides comfort oriented symptom management during the last six months of life. Medication, relaxation therapy, spiritual and emotional support and pain management are all an integral part of the service. Mitigation of symptoms including the treatment of overlying infections, regulation of cardiac symptoms, blood pressure maintenance and breathing difficulties may all be treated through the utilization of maintenance drugs. Promoting quality of life with the occasional use of treatments such as transfusions or even minimal radiation treatments are all a part of the holistic approach.

Hospice also recognizes the needs of the whole family, in addition to that of the patient and is professionally equipped to offer compassionate advice on medical, emotional, social and grief issues which arise.

Some Certified Home Health Agencies (CHHA) programs (even those with their own hospice) have a different interpretation of hospice service. Such programs consider hospice to be care for those persons very near death. The only medication that is offered is for pain and often patients are removed from all regular maintenance medications. Even simple infections may go untreated

CHHA's with this interpretation of hospice care keep patients on their fee for service based care; usually marketing to the community a type of transitional, enriched or palliative program that is "just like hospice." In fact they are offering a diluted version of hospice care which can, in no way, address the depth and breadth of issues that are addressed by true hospice care. Nor can they provide the quality of life that is the main goal of Hospice of Orleans.

If this type of agency were allowed to enter our arena of health care, it would greatly impact the quality of care provided to this community and could ultimately impact the viability of existing agencies.

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