

## Palliative Care

# Clinical psychology in palliative care

## Information on seeing a clinical psychologist working in the Addenbrooke's Palliative Care Team

The Palliative Care Team is a multi-professional one, offering support, help and advice designed to meet the individual needs of each patient and their family referred to the service. Patients may be seen by different team members according to their particular needs and may require input from a clinical nurse specialist or doctor, or more specialist input on the emotional and psychological aspects may also be requested from a clinical psychologist.

### What is a clinical psychologist?

A clinical psychologist is someone who is specifically trained and professionally qualified to help people with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties. They help people of all ages and backgrounds with all kinds of problems and are trained to listen to the individual's own story and experience of the world. They are not medically trained professionals and do not prescribe medications.

### What problems could be helped by a clinical psychologist?

It is natural for medical conditions and treatment to create changes that can be difficult to deal with. You may be feeling anxious about what may happen, sad about things that you can no longer do, or annoyed at what seems unfair. Sharing these feelings with family and friends may be all that is required. However some people have thoughts and feelings that are difficult to share with people they know, or they feel that they are going over and over problems but not finding that they feel any better. This is when a clinical psychologist may be able to offer ways of helping you.

A clinical psychologist is able to:

- Listen to what you say, take your problems seriously, and if appropriate offer help to meet your particular needs.
- Work in consultation and co-operation with you, and if desired with others who are closely involved in your life.

The range of problems that can affect people includes:

- Coping with uncertainty
- Coping with treatments
- Distress about diagnosis
- Relationship strain and difficulties
- Coping with changes in how you look

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- Coping with changes in role
  - Loss of confidence
  - Loss of pleasure in activities previously enjoyed
  - Fear of death
  - Bereavement and loss issues
  - Anxiety
  - Panic attacks
  - Low mood
  - Depression

### **What type of therapy does a clinical psychologist offer?**

Psychological therapy aims to strengthen the person's ability to cope with problems and help them to learn additional skills and strategies. The person may find it useful to learn different ways of thinking about their situation. It may be useful to learn additional ways of managing feelings. Some people may want to change aspects of their behaviour in some way but are uncertain how to do this.

### **Where will I see the clinical psychologist and what will be discussed?**

If you are staying in the hospital, the psychologist will try to meet with you in a private space. In cases where this is difficult or you are feeling unable to leave your bed, the psychologist will meet you at your bedside and try to make the meeting as private as possible. If you are not staying in the hospital, the clinical psychologist will arrange to see you at the outpatient clinic where a private room will be booked.

The length of the meeting will be guided by your needs and wishes, but would not usually be more than an hour.

### **What will happen to the information I share with the clinical psychologist?**

Anything you say to a member of the palliative care team will be treated confidentially. However we all work as part of a multi-disciplinary team and at times it may be necessary to share some of your discussions with other colleagues. This will only happen if:

- Sharing knowledge will improve the care you receive
- It is necessary to refer to another specialist
- There are 'special' circumstances involving risk of harm

If we feel it necessary to share any information that you have disclosed, we will **always** discuss this with you first.

### **If you require any further information please contact:**

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Macmillan/Evelyn Trust Consultant Clinical Psychologist in Palliative Care  
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#### Turkish

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#### Bengali

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