

Cardiac rehabilitation and anticipatory care

Cardiac rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation is designed to help your recovery and to live well. It usually includes a mix of exercise, education and psychological support for the anger, frustration, anxiety and depression that people with heart failure may often feel.

Cardiac rehabilitation also offers you the chance to meet other people with heart failure and other heart problems who may be able to give you emotional support and help you with the practical problems of living with heart failure.

Cardiac rehabilitation can also support you to eat more healthily, quit smoking and safely increase exercise levels. It also gives you an opportunity to talk to your care team about your personal concerns and worries, for example sexual concerns or problems.

Unfortunately, cardiac rehabilitation is not offered in every country and services can differ between countries.

Why are my heart failure team talking about anticipatory care planning and palliative care?

ANTICIPATORY CARE PLANNING

Anticipatory or advanced care planning gives the people with heart failure, their caregivers and families the chance to talk about how they want to be treated, such as at the end of life. Talking about anticipatory care planning helps many people feel relieved and more in control of their care.

Heart failure is often unpredictable. You may start talking about care plans long before you need to think about the end of life. Unfortunately, anticipatory care planning is often not offered or is done poorly.

ADVANCE DIRECTIVE

Palliative care, sometimes called supportive care, does not mean treatment ends.

An advance directive, sometimes called a living will, reflects your personal values and goals for future care. The advance directive also helps your care team and your family ensure that they do what you would prefer if you can no longer communicate well. For example, an advance directive could indicate when to de-activate devices, whether you want to be resuscitated or not, or indicate where you would like to die.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care aims to improve the quality of life of the person living with heart failure as well as their families who are facing challenges associated with the illness, whether physical, psychological, social or spiritual. It focuses closely on the needs of the person with heart failure and their caregivers and family to make quality of life best possible.

These talks should begin early in your illness, get more focused as your heart failure moves into the advanced stage and should continue, if needed, to help caregivers and family members deal with bereavement.

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