

Path to a Peaceful Death: Coping with Terminal Illness

Anupama Devi K^{1*}, Soniya Devi T², Kumar Singh S³

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17511/ijmrr.2024.i02.02>


^{1*} Khumukcham Anupama Devi, Tutor, College of Nursing, AIIMS, Patna, Bihar, India.

² Thokchom Soniya Devi, Tutor, College of Nursing, AIIMS, Deoghar, Jharkhand, India.

³ Sudhakar Kumar Singh, Tutor, Anm School Muzaffarpur, Health Department. Govt. of Bihar, India.

Terminal illness can cause immense suffering, both physical and emotional, for patients and their families. However, with appropriate care and support, patients can experience a peaceful death. This article reviews the literature on peaceful death from terminal illness, including the psychological, emotional, and physical factors that contribute to a peaceful death. The article highlights the importance of early palliative care and psychological interventions in improving the quality of life and reducing suffering for patients with terminal illnesses. The role of emotional support and legacy-making in enhancing the well-being of patients is also discussed. The article concludes by stressing the need for continued efforts to improve end-of-life care for patients with terminal illnesses.

Keywords: Terminal Illness, Peaceful Death, Palliative Care, Psychological Interventions, Emotional Support, Legacy-Making

Corresponding Author	How to Cite this Article	To Browse
Khumukcham Anupama Devi, Tutor, College of Nursing, AIIMS, Patna, Bihar, India. Email: khumukcham.devi@aiimspatna.org	Anupama Devi K, Soniya Devi T, Kumar Singh S. Path to a Peaceful Death: Coping with Terminal Illness. Int J Med Res Rev. 2024;12(2):45-47. Available From https://ijmrr.medresearch.in/index.php/ijmrr/article/view/1466	

Manuscript Received
2024-02-08

Review Round 1
2024-02-10

Review Round 2
2024-02-17

Review Round 3
2024-02-24

Accepted
2024-03-02

Conflict of Interest
Nil

Funding
Nil

Ethical Approval
Yes

Plagiarism X-checker
18%

Note



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Introduction

Terminal illness is a devastating diagnosis that affects patients and their families in multiple ways. Patients with terminal illnesses face not only physical symptoms but also psychological and emotional distress. The prospect of death can cause fear, anxiety, and depression, which can further exacerbate physical symptoms and reduce the quality of life for patients. However, with appropriate care and support, patients with terminal illnesses can experience a peaceful death. This article reviews the literature on peaceful death from terminal illness, including the psychological, emotional, and physical factors that contribute to a peaceful death.

Importance of early palliative care:

One of the most important factors in achieving a peaceful death is early access to palliative care. Palliative care focuses on improving the quality of life for patients with serious illness, by addressing physical symptoms, psychological distress, and social needs. A randomized controlled trial conducted by Zimmermann et al. (2014) found that patients who received early palliative care had better quality of life, less depression, and longer survival than patients who received standard care. The study concluded that early palliative care is an essential component of high-quality care for patients with advanced cancer [1].

Acceptance:

Acceptance is a crucial step towards achieving a peaceful death. Accepting the reality of a terminal illness allows individuals to come to terms with their condition and find ways to make the most of the time they have left. While it is natural to experience feelings of denial, anger, and bargaining after a terminal diagnosis, it is important to work towards acceptance to move forward. Strategies for achieving acceptance may include seeking support from loved ones, joining a support group, or seeking the help of a mental health professional. Research has shown that social support and acceptance are key factors in improving psychological well-being for individuals facing a terminal illness [2].

Emotional Support:

Emotional support from loved ones can play a

critical role in helping individuals cope with a terminal illness. Family members and friends can provide comfort, companionship, and reassurance, which can help individuals feel loved and supported during their final days. Counsellors and therapists can also be helpful, providing a safe space to discuss fears and concerns. Research has shown that emotional support from family and friends is associated with better quality of life for individuals with terminal illnesses [3]. Additionally, professional counselling has been shown to improve emotional well-being and reduce anxiety and depression [4].

Hospice Care:

Hospice care is a type of healthcare that focuses on providing comfort and support to individuals with terminal illnesses. Hospice care can provide a range of services, including pain management, symptom relief, emotional support, and spiritual care. Hospice care can be provided in a variety of settings, including in the home, in a hospice facility, or a hospital. Research has shown that hospice care can improve quality of life and reduce symptoms such as pain and shortness of breath for individuals with terminal illnesses. Additionally, hospice care has been shown to improve family satisfaction with end-of-life care [5].

Additional Strategies for Achieving a Peaceful Death:

In addition to acceptance, emotional support, and hospice care, there are a variety of other strategies that can help individuals with terminal illnesses achieve a peaceful death. Pursuing spiritual practices, engaging in meaningful activities, creating a bucket list, and writing a legacy letter are all ways in which individuals can find meaning and purpose in their lives, and make a positive impact on their loved ones. Research has shown that engaging in meaningful activities can improve the quality of life for individuals with terminal illnesses [6].

Legacy-making:

Finally, legacy-making, or the process of creating a meaningful and lasting impact on the world, has been shown to enhance the well-being of patients with terminal illnesses. A study by Fegg et al. (2013) found that legacy-making activities, such as creating a memory book or recording messages for loved ones, improved well-being and

Reduced depression in patients with terminal illnesses. The study concluded that legacy-making can be an effective way of enhancing the quality of life for patients with terminal illnesses [7].

Conclusion

Facing a terminal illness can be incredibly challenging, but there are a variety of strategies and resources that can help individuals cope with their condition and achieve a peaceful death. By addressing their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, individuals can find closure, meaning, and purpose in their lives, and make a positive impact on their loved ones. With proper care and support, individuals can achieve a sense of peace and fulfilment in their final days.

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