

Putting Patients First

Recently, we heard a story from our Advanced Illness Management (AIM) Nurse Practitioner, Marcelli Contreras, who worked with her team to provide to best possible outcome for a patient in need.

The patient underwent a complicated gallbladder surgery and stayed at a rehab facility for a lengthy period of time. The patient complained of stomach pains that were unrelieved despite having the surgery. The pains limited the patient's mobility and caused nausea, vomiting and weight loss.

After initial contact, the team realized the patient was referring to back pains as stomach pains. The patient jumped in pain when pressure was applied to the spine area. Pain medications were not helping the patient and only caused more nausea, vomiting and constipation. There were additional problems of heart issues, uncontrolled hypertension and palpitations. The AIM team became the family's support from that time on.

The AIM team did advanced care planning, spoke with the family and visited frequently. The patient was admitted back into the ER and rehab facility. The team followed the patient to rehab due to the calls from the family about problems and uncontrolled pains and constipation and attended the patient's next PCP visit. The team encouraged the PCP to evaluate the pains again while paying close attention to the spine area. An MRI was ordered.

Two weeks later, the MRI showed a mass on the spine that was wrapped around the nerves, causing the pains. Despite the diagnosis, the patient and family were happy their complaints were validated. After the diagnosis, the patient was offered radiation, because surgery would be too risky. The patient elected to receive radiation, but it did not help. The team continued to follow the patient and spoke to the family about hospice care and palliative care.

Shortly after, the patient passed on under hospice care surrounded by their family. They were comforted by the fact they did everything they could to help and the patient passed on in comfort.

"You are an angel on earth," a family member texted Marcelli. "I can't thank you enough."

This story is a shining example of how the AIM team can have a positive impact on the lives of your patients. We want to extend a special "Thank You" to Marcelli and the entire AIM team who work to improve the lives and care of our patients every day.