

# PALLIATIVE CARE



**The Canadian Institute for Health Information estimates that up to 89% of Canadians could have benefitted from palliative care prior to death – almost everyone whose death was not sudden or unexpected. Despite this great need for palliative care, only 30% of Canadians who need it have access to palliative care, and only 15% have access to early palliative care in their community.**

Palliative care is holistic, person-centered care for people facing life-limiting illnesses or disabilities. Palliative care neither hastens death nor unnaturally prolongs life. Instead, it focuses on giving patients their best possible quality of life despite illness or disability.

The expansion of medical assistance in dying (MAiD) in Canada is dramatically altering the face of palliative care. Palliative care is founded on a right acceptance of the natural cycle from birth to death. But some palliative care facilities now offer MAiD on site, blurring the distinction between end-of-life care and actively ending the life of the patient. Canada needs to increase access to palliative care, but it must maintain a sharp distinction between palliative care and MAiD.

The specialized palliative care workforce is currently not large enough to meet the growing demand for palliative care in Canada's aging population. Recommendations include increasing training in medical schools, specialized training for paramedics, and other continued education to support palliative specialists by better equipping allied health care providers for palliative care discussions.

Rural and urban settings have different care needs, and within these contexts each community has unique needs, culture, and ideas on how to best care for their own members. ARPA Canada especially supports independent palliative institutions that meet distinct religious, ethical, or cultural preferences to provide choice in palliative care.

Palliative care should be a standard part of medical care, introduced alongside diagnosis and engaged throughout treatment as well as through the final weeks and days of life.

*For more information about this topic, please refer to our related policy report document. This report can be found on our website at [ARPACanada.ca/publication/palliative-care](https://www.arpacanada.ca/publication/palliative-care).*