Heart Talk:
Discussing Palliative Care and End of Life
Module 5:
Evidence-based Education for Health Care Professionals
Palliative Care

- Symptom therapy without affecting the underlying disease process
- Does not require patient to be in final months of life
- Can be concurrent with curative therapy
Hospice Care

- Treatment for the final 6 months of life
- Includes palliation
- End of life (EOL) care for patients and families
- Increased services and support
Starting the Conversation

- Always check with MD first
  - Very frustrating for patients and families if providers give different opinions on prognosis
- Don’t assume!
  - Many patients at or near EOL are never told their condition may lead to death in the near future
Begin the Discussion

- Encourage patients to think about “What’s most important?”
  - Staying out of the hospital?
  - Returning to previous level of function?
  - Time with family, significant others?
Begin the Discussion

- Practical considerations
  - Who will make decisions if they cannot speak for themselves?
  - What are their feelings about life support, mechanical ventilation, breathing tubes, etc.?
Begin the Discussion

- Conversations need to be ongoing
- Very little accomplished in one discussion
- End of life decisions are a process
- Social work consult can be helpful
For information on the Heart Talk videos, please visit us on our website: www.qualidigm.org or email us at:

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Credits

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