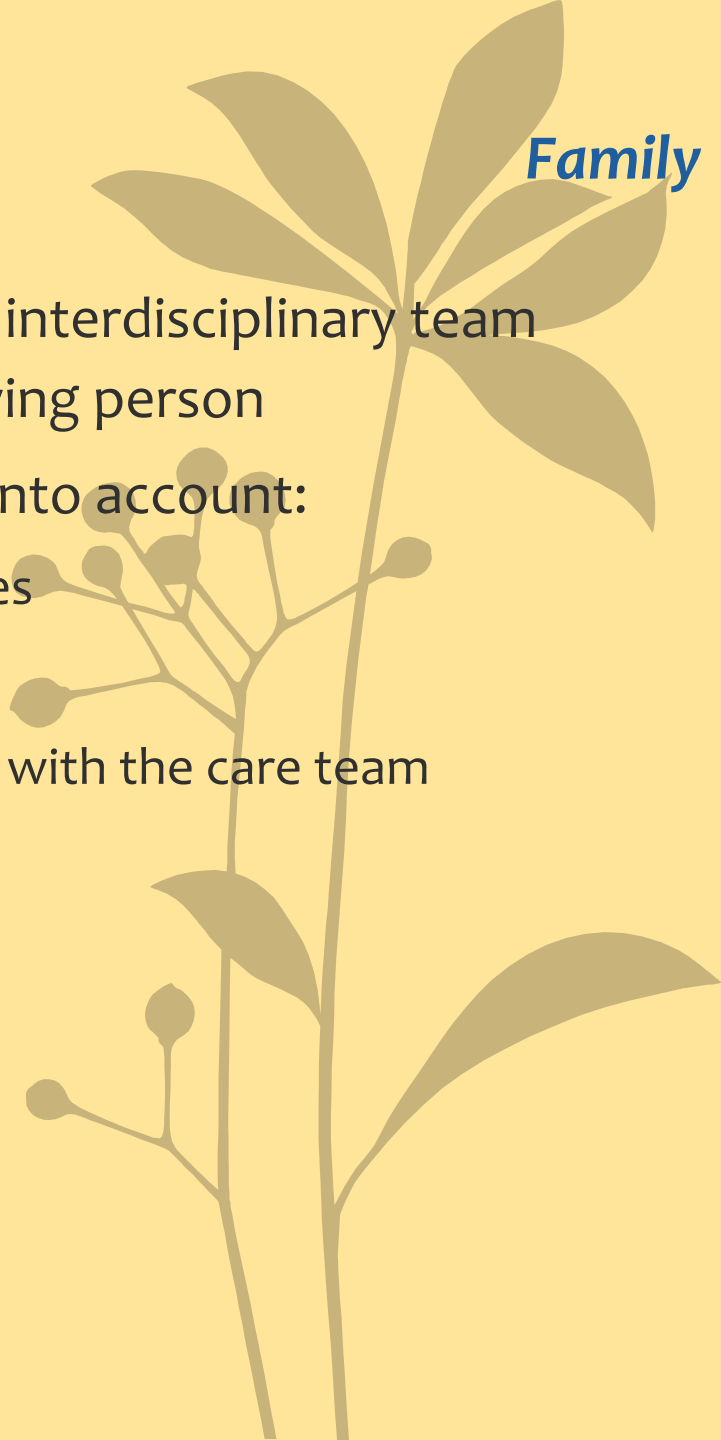


***Module 3:  
Family  
and  
Family Dynamics***

# Overview

- “Family” is defined as anyone outside the interdisciplinary team involved in caring for or supporting the dying person
- Each family has its own dynamics to take into account:
  - Role of each member – including gender roles
  - Authority for decision-making
  - Communication styles within the family, and with the care team



# The Family's Role in Hospice Palliative Care

Family



- Providing Care and Support:
  - The normal rhythm of the family changes. Roles may change dramatically:
    - Children may become caregivers for parents
    - A spouse may suddenly be thrust into a decision-making role, with little prior experience
    - The person who has always provided emotional support may now be the one who needs that support
    - A couple's familiar relationship may be changed, as one spouse may have to take on intimate care tasks such as bathing, cleaning or feeding the other
- Receiving Care and Support:
  - Each member of the family will have his/her own worries and will need support:
    - Is the dying person receiving the best possible care?
    - Is it OK to leave that person alone?
    - What will happen when he/she dies?
    - How will I ever survive all this?

# When Families Don't Work

- The stress on family structures can translate into dysfunction:

Cooperation among family members may break down

Resentment

Anger

Frustration

- A history of problems within the family may emerge:

Financial difficulties

Substance abuse

Mental illness

*Family*



# Your Role with the Family

- Help family members provide care and take on new roles:
  - Share knowledge
  - Report changing needs, or concerns about family members' ability to provide for those needs, to supervisor
  - Help with unfamiliar tasks
  - Give the dying person and family some time together
  - Support the family
    - Be there, and pay attention to changing moods
    - Keep the dying person company, so that family members can take occasional break
    - Remain non-judgmental
    - Allow family to express their emotions



# Your Role with the Family (cont'd)

- Help family manage stress and burnout
  - Be aware of caregivers' stress levels
  - Create opportunities for caregivers to care for themselves on occasion
  - Watch for signs of burnout
  - Suggest appropriate actions for dealing with negative feelings
  - Provide information on community resources that might help
  - Discuss serious family problems with other members of health team
- Recognize and report serious problems
  - Again: your role is to support, not fix
  - Help the family to get help, if needed
  - Report signs of abuse or neglect to your supervisor
- Provide support for grief and bereavement
  - Your support continues for a period of time after the patient has died, through the time of bereavement

# Next Steps?

- Click on the link below to take you to the *Module 3: Family and Family Dynamics* quiz section
  - [Module 3 Quiz](#)

