

IMPACT OF AGE AND FINANCIAL STATUS OF PATIENTS OR CAREGIVERS ON PERCEPTIONS OF HOSPICE CARE AND THE CHOICE OF HOSPICE V. HOSPITAL CARE AT TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS

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Hospice is designed to provide quality end-of-life medical care for patients and support for their families. Most insurance, including Medicaid, provides hospice benefits. Why then do so few people enter hospice? I hypothesized that the perception of hospice care as a last resort drives the decision to choose hospital care at terminal diagnosis. However, the data shows that although a large number of respondents across age and income groups did not regard hospice care as a last resort when asked to make a hypothetical decision between hospice and hospital care, they primarily chose hospital care except when life expectancy was less than 3 months. Subjects aged 30 and under showed higher preference for hospital care even when given life expectancy of less than 3 months. Respondents were more likely to choose hospital over hospice care when making the decision for a family member than for themselves. Given 6 months or more to live with a terminal disease, respondents generally chose hospital care, perhaps in anticipation of a curative option which may not be available for diseases such as end-stage Alzheimer's. I support my hypothesis that the perception of hospice as a last resort is a significant barrier to hospice use. Email: kishjahn@gmail.com