

Palliative Care for Pain Management

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The CSSS des Sommets has a small palliative care unit. It has recently been moved from the Philippe Lapointe Pavilion to the third floor of the hospital. In it, patients are treated with the utmost consideration of their physical and emotional needs, and their families are included in the compassionate embrace of the staff.

I discussed the atmosphere of the unit and the care received there with a man suffering from prostate cancer. He has been in and out of the unit since the early spring, and is now comfortably at home, where I spoke with him and his wife about their experience.

They started by telling me that the experience had been totally positive. The nurses responded to every need with a smile and an explanation. While the patient I interviewed can get by in French, his wife is hard-pressed to understand more than simple conversation. Attempts were always made to communicate in English, and, failing that, gestures, simplified vocabulary and great good will ensured that everything was understood on both sides. There was never a feeling of anything but the greatest respect for patient and family and accommodation of their needs, in English as much as possible. While the physical location of the unit has changed since, the same team of caregivers are still together, providing the same level and quality of service.

Since his discharge, the patient has been in his own home where he receives a steady stream of professional help from different departments of the CSSS des Sommets. A nurse visits several times a week to administer injections and to ensure that all the medical needs are met. A physiotherapist has provided exercises and training to enable the patient to regain physical strength and mobility after several bedridden weeks and serious weight loss. A nutritionist has consulted him on dietary improvements based on the patient's needs and preferences. Although all these professionals have been francophone, all have communicated effectively in English. There are some holes in the provision of written materials in English, however everything necessary has been annotated so that there is no question about understanding before the documents are left in the hands of the patient and his wife.

The CSSS des Sommets is right to be proud of its ability to respond to the needs of the community in this and so many other ways. Don't hesitate to use local services that are right at your doorstep. There is no need to travel great distances to receive quality health care – or care in English. This institution is an important part of our community and strives to communicate with all of us in our preferred language.

Sheila Eskenazi, President, English Communities Committee of the CSSS des Sommets