

# Health Disparities in the Medi-Cal Population

## Palliative Care

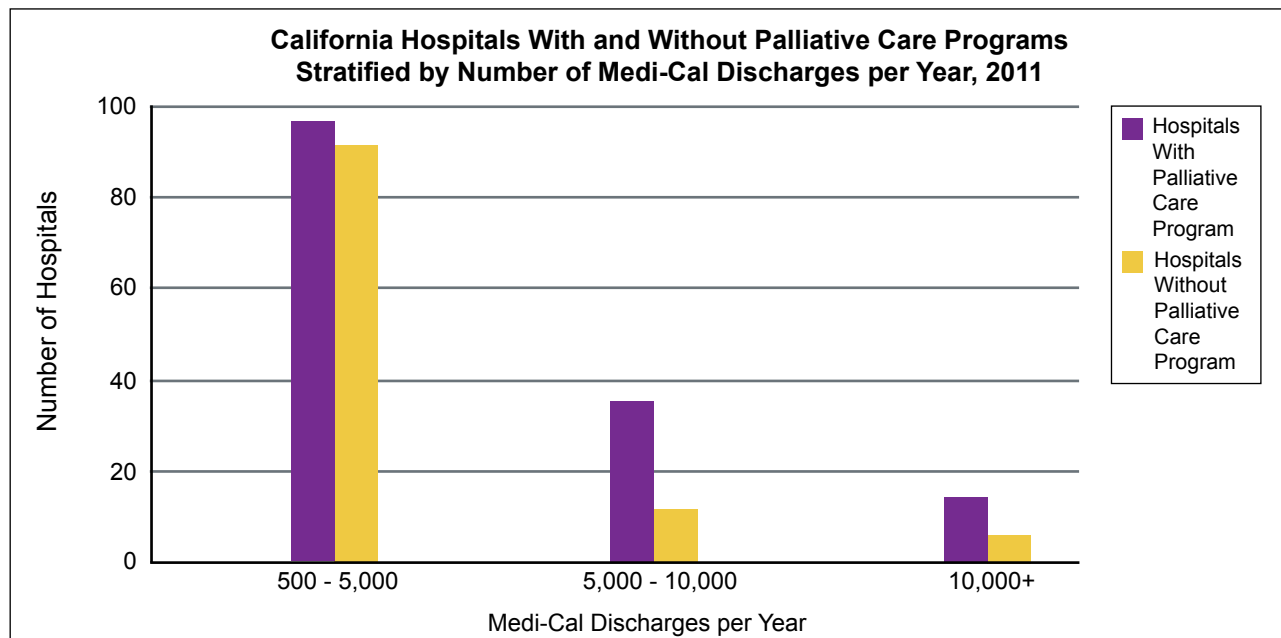


Palliative care programs help people and their families manage the pain and stress of serious diseases rather than to treat or seek a cure. As a specialized type of medical care, palliative care can increase patients' quality of life and in some instances extend life. It can also provide options about how and where to manage terminal illnesses.<sup>1</sup> Studies showed that palliative care programs can reduce costs.<sup>1-3</sup> Based on surveys of California hospitals, between 2007 and 2011, pediatric palliative care increased by 128% and adult palliative care increased by 24%. In 2011, 53% of California hospitals had some type of palliative care program.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to understand the degree to which Medi-Cal members have access to palliative care. One important initiative has led to a 3-fold increase in palliative care programs in California public hospitals (from 4 to 12).<sup>4</sup> The Figure below shows the number of hospitals in three groups categorized by the number of Medi-Cal hospital discharges per year. The Figure then shows the proportion of the hospitals with palliative care programs.<sup>5</sup> For example, there were 185 hospitals with between 500 and 5,000 Medi-Cal discharges per year, and within this group, 96 (52%) of the hospitals had a palliative care program. Hospitals that treat a large number of Medi-Cal members each year generally have palliative care programs.



Figure



Source: UCSF Palliative Care Survey of California Hospitals; Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) facility reports, 2011.

1. California Healthcare Foundation. When compassion is the cure: Progress and promise in hospital-based palliative care. 2012 Foundation, conducted by UCSF
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3. Morrison RS, Penrod JD, Cassel JB, et al. Cost savings associated with US hospital palliative care consultation programs. *Arch Intern Med.* 2008;168(16):1783.
4. Brousseau RT, Jameson W, Kalanj B, Kerr K, O'Malley K, Pantilat S. A multifaceted approach to spreading palliative care consultation services in California public hospital systems. *J Qual Assur.* 2012;34(2):77-85.
5. Pantilat SZ, Kerr KM, Billings JA, Bruno KA, O'Riordan DL. Palliative care services in California hospitals: Program prevalence and hospital characteristics. *J Pain Symptom Manage.* 2012;43(1):39-46.