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diagnosis. Heart, lung, and kidney diseases, dementia, and other diseases are also common for patients receiving hospice care.

Another reason for the late start on hospice; doctors. Often people's doctors don't discuss hospice with them at an appropriate time, or at all. In a 2009 study conducted by Harvard Medical School, researchers found that almost half of patients with a very fatal form of cancer (metastasized lung cancer, which is the leading cancer killer), didn't discuss hospice care with their doctor until four to seven months after receiving their diagnosis. This is disturbing because the average time a patient lives after being diagnosed is only four to eight months.

One more reason is that some families associate the word hospice with death, and think of it as giving up. It may be difficult for a family member, be it a spouse or child, to make the call to hospice, even if it is appropriate. It's hard for any of us to imagine that our loved one may not recover from their illness.

All of these reasons may contribute to a patient not receiving hospice care soon enough. When this happens, everyone loses out. The family could have benefited from more help with caregiving, the easing of their fear and anxiety, and more assistance than the short stay on hospice was able to offer them. The patient could have received better pain and symptom management, and had a higher quality of life for longer.

The thing about good hospice care, like that provided by Hospice of North Idaho, is that it focuses on the quality of the days a patient has left. If referred early enough, this could mean six months of quality living. When a patient enrolls late, often a family or caregiver has been struggling on their own to manage the care for quite some time, and the patient may have had to experience pain or discomfort.

Hospice of North Idaho's goal is to neither hasten nor extend life, but to focus on

affirming life. A patient and their family benefit the most from hospice when they enroll early and take advantage of all that



comes with this service. Patients deserve the attention and families deserve the assistance that comes with Hospice of North Idaho's care.

So, what do you have to lose? Keep in mind, that if a patient at any time starts to improve or doesn't need the services, they can be discharged from hospice care. Please, take the advice from some of our families and call Hospice of North Idaho early, before you need us. We are here to answer any questions you may have, and can point you in the right direction, even if hospice isn't the answer right now.

Call us now (208)772-7994, or visit our website at www.hospiceofnorthidaho.org to access information on end-of-life care, planning for the future, and serious illness.

Hospice of North Idaho is the community's only local, non-profit hospice. We have been serving the seriously ill and those touched by loss since 1981. In 2011, Hospice of North Idaho expanded its services by opening the only Hospice House in Idaho, a beautiful inpatient hospice facility. Hospice of North Idaho serves everyone in our community, regardless of their ability to pay for services.

208-772-7994

