

VITAS Supports Patients With Advanced Heart Failure in Their Preferred Care Setting



Hospice enrollment for heart failure patients is linked to fewer hospital, ICU, and emergency department visits. Research demonstrates earlier hospice referrals improve the quality of end-of-life care for patients and families.¹ Additionally, for patients discharged after acute decompensated heart failure, hospice referrals at discharge significantly reduced 30-day and 6-month all-cause hospital readmission rates.²

At VITAS[®] Healthcare, our comprehensive cardiac program is certified nationwide by the American Heart Association, tailored to meet the needs of patients with advanced heart disease, including heart failure and other serious cardiac conditions. Our focus is managing symptoms, improving quality of life, and supporting patients and families.



VITAS Specialized Care Team

- **Nurses with cardiac expertise** are trained to assess and monitor cardiac symptoms, manage medication, and intervene early when symptoms intensify.
- **Physicians and nurse practitioners:** Including board certified hospice and palliative medicine medical directors, partner to develop personalized care plans for cardiac patients.
- **Social workers** offer emotional and logistical support for patients and their loved ones during a vulnerable time.
- **Chaplains** provide spiritual and emotional support tailored to patients' beliefs and needs.
- **Home health aides** provide personal care to ensure comfort and support with daily activities.



Symptom Management and Medication Optimization

- **Diuretic Management:** Adjustments in diuretic therapy to manage fluid retention and reduce symptoms like swelling and shortness of breath.
- **Pain and Symptom Control:** Medications are provided for fatigue, pain, anxiety, shortness of breath, and other cardiac symptoms. This may include oxygen therapy, opioids, and other heart-specific medications.
- **Cardiac Device Management:** Collaboration with cardiologists to manage devices like pacemakers and defibrillators and, if appropriate, transition to a less intensive approach.



Emergency and Crisis Planning/Telehealth

- **24/7 On-Call Support:** VITAS Telecare provides access to hospice nurses who can address sudden symptom changes.
- **Education for Families and Caregivers:** Training on recognizing and managing symptoms at home, including steps to alleviate breathlessness and anxiety during cardiac episodes.



Education and Emotional Support for Patients and Families

- We provide resources and guidance for understanding cardiac conditions, disease progression, and comfort measures.
- Ongoing support groups and counseling to help families with anticipatory grief, stress, and emotional needs.



Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care

- We facilitate discussions about goals of care, including preferences for resuscitation, device deactivation, and other end-of-life care options.
- Ensuring all team members understand the patient's wishes for interventions and comfort-focused care.



Collaboration with Cardiology Specialists

- Coordination with the patient's cardiologist for seamless communication on treatment goals, medication changes, and device management decisions.



Bereavement Support for Families

- Bereavement services are provided for families after the patient's passing, with grief counseling, support groups, and follow-up calls to offer continued support.



Staff Education

- VITAS staff education takes cardiac care expectations to the next level. It involves ongoing oversight of clinical care delivery, patient and family education, care coordination, and performance improvement, all while incorporating a metrics-driven approach designed to improve outcomes.

¹ Yim et al. (2017). "Hospice enrollment in patients with advanced heart failure decreases acute medical service utilization." *Circulation: Heart Failure* 10.3 e003335.

² Kheirbek et al. (2015) "Discharge hospice referral and lower 30-day all-cause readmission in Medicare beneficiaries hospitalized for heart failure." *Circulation: Heart Failure* 8.4: 733-740.

VITAS[®]
Healthcare

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Since 1980

VITAS is the first national hospice provider to earn the American Heart Association (AHA) Palliative/Hospice Heart Failure certification across all 15 states in which it operates.

- Best-in-class care: The leading US cardiac organization recognizes the VITAS care model as best-in-class for advanced cardiac patients, from admission through bereavement.
- A trusted endorsement: Patients can trust VITAS to meet the AHA's gold standard for advanced cardiac care.

