



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AARP Andrus Foundation Supports NHPCO Hospice Care Quality Project

ALEXANDRIA, Va., March 19, 2002– The nation's hospice and palliative care programs are a step closer to implementing new and innovative methods for measuring the quality of end-of-life care with a recently awarded research grant from the AARP Andrus Foundation to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO). The \$100,000 grant will support a key portion of NHPCO's National Quality Partnership Program – a system to assess the quality of end-of-life care delivered in the United States.

With the National Quality Partnership Program, NHPCO is seeking to develop and implement a system for hospice programs to measure their performance. These measures would inform patients and families about the quality and range of end-of-life care services being delivered – giving people the tools they need to get the best care for themselves and their loved ones. While empowering patients and families with important information about end-of-life care, such measures would also provide key insights to end-of-life care providers, insurers, and federal and state regulators to further advance the practice of hospice and palliative care.

Hospice and palliative care are focused on achieving quality of life for patients and families by aggressively treating pain and symptoms and providing emotional, social, and spiritual support. The NHPCO National Quality Partnership Program's objective is to develop performance measures derived from the following primary goals – or outcomes – of hospice and palliative care:

- Self-determined life closure – giving patients full autonomy to make decisions about how the remainder of their lives are spent;
- Safe and comfortable dying – dying free of distressing symptoms in a safe environment; and,
- Effective grieving – expressing grief supports individuals in adjusting to their environment without the deceased and in regaining the ability to invest in other activities and relationships.

The Andrus Foundation's grant will support NHPCO's efforts to develop a methodology to help hospice and palliative care programs to gauge the extent to which patients experience self-determined life closure.

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“Measuring the quality of end-of-life care presents unique challenges,” NHPCO Research and Development Vice President Stephen Connor, Ph.D. said. “While surveys show that family satisfaction with hospice care is extremely high, it is extremely difficult – but far from impossible – to quantify a concept such as self-determined life closure. That’s why the support from the Andrus Foundation is so important. As the nation’s population ages, advancing the quality, delivery, and practice of hospice and palliative care will be an essential part of preparing our health care system for the unprecedented demands of the future.”

“A Pathway for Patients and Families Facing Terminal Illness,” a report on the development of outcome measures for end-of-life care is available in the “Press” section of NHPCO’s web site, www.nhpco.org.

NHPCO is the oldest and largest nonprofit membership organization representing hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. The organization is committed to improving end-of-life care and expanding access to hospice care with the goal of profoundly enhancing quality of life for people dying in America and their loved ones.

The AARP Andrus Foundation, www.andrus.org, provides knowledge and education through research which helps the growing population concerned with aging find solutions to the challenges of aging and approaches to retaining independence and dignity throughout life. Established in 1968 as a memorial to Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational organization affiliated with the American Association of Retired Persons.