

## 9. PROVIDING SUPPORT IN PALLIATIVE CARE

*Reference: Psychosocial Clinical Practice Guidelines (1999), pp.55-59.*

### EVIDENCE

- Quality of life has been shown to influence survival (Level II).
- Uncontrolled physical symptoms, eg. pain, fatigue, result in greater psychological distress & decreased physical & social functioning (Level IVa).

### OBJECTIVE

To ensure that women with advanced breast disease have adequate support, minimising the psychosocial impact of both the disease & treatment side effects, and to maintain quality of life.

### Introducing palliative care

#### CHECKLIST

- Assess the woman's understanding of her:
  - condition
  - treatment options
  - prognosis.
- Discuss current lifestyle & priorities in relation to treatment.
- Discuss a plan for the future management of care & ensure that the short & medium term outcomes are understood.
- Keep the woman & her support network continually informed about issues of greatest priority to them, eg. symptom management, service availability.
- Encourage early intervention of palliative care services (section 12.2.6).



## Physical issues

### CHECKLIST

- Highlight the importance of active treatment of symptoms in ongoing care.
- Discuss symptom management, particularly pain & fatigue.
- Provide & discuss specific measures available for symptom relief.

## Psychological, social & other Issues

### CHECKLIST

- Encourage discussion by asking how the woman, her family & friends are coping.
- Encourage discussion about issues related to death & dying.
- Inquire about spiritual issues & arrange pastoral care if desired.
- Where appropriate, make arrangements for counselling & support for the woman & her family.  
Consider:
  - support groups
  - volunteer services
  - meals on wheels
  - palliative care domiciliary services.
- Ask about practical needs, including financial & legal issues.
- Breast Care Nurse to liaise with Palliative Care Team to provide information about practical support services.
- Explain your level of availability for future advice & support.