

Developing a Path to Palliative Care

By Karen Maedo

Technology permeates all areas of life and is inescapable. For older folks- including this writer- technology makes life incredibly easy, just as it frustrates and bewilders along the way! As a community advocate, serving alongside medical professionals and providers at Community First's Regional Health Partnership, I would like to introduce and educate the public about an exciting, data driven technology in healthcare that already exists in Hilo. (Disclosure: I am President of the Board at Hawai'i Care Choices).

Dr. Lynda Dolan of The Family Medicine Center began using data driven technology this year with her patients experiencing serious illness, to help her members get the right care at the right time. Using data driven technology can help to identify rising risk patients for services sooner. This generates options for the patients, which makes delivering effective health care more accessible.

Acclivity Health, a predictive analytics platform uses data driven technology to identify a patient's rising risk factors and make it simpler for them to get the right care, at the right time, in the right setting. This enables our palliative and home health organizations to increase hospital transitions, get earlier referrals, and improve both care and length of stay. While there are many challenges to delivering palliative care, Hawai'i Care Choices (formerly Hospice of Hilo) embraces this through its Mission: to improve the lives of those we touch by offering support, guidance, and compassionate care of body, mind, and spirit. All of us will eventually be on life's final journey; therefore, wouldn't it be a positive step if there was a way to know- ahead of time- how long this path may be?

As patients, we do not understand the business of healthcare, nor do we seek the reasons for inefficiency. We simply want to know the status of our health, treatment options available, and costs we can afford. A critical piece of any diagnosis must consider the patient's needs, points of view and experiences, as well as input from loved ones. One's own physician plays a critical role, and it is in his/her office that the process begins. When serious illness is encountered delivering quality information is essential to providing the right care at the right time for patients and their families.

Community First, whose Executive Director is Randy Kurohara, and President and Chairperson is Toby Taniguchi, is the movement begun by Barry Taniguchi. It was created to address healthcare in East Hawai'i, especially to make the invisible (health care) visible. This consortium of dedicated doctors and providers across the medical spectrum, solicits input from the populace, seeks to understand needs, and works together to develop ways to address them efficiently and cost-effectively. Community First believes in the importance of educating the community through awareness about palliative care, its benefits, and other care options. One of the non profit's aims is to connect individuals living with serious illnesses to quality palliative care on Hawai'i Island by supporting palliative care awareness and education through community partnerships, community and provider education.

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This editorial is brought to you by Community First a 501 (c) 3 non-profit founded by the late Barry Taniguchi in 2014 to serve as a neutral forum for the community to come together, and as a catalyst for solutions to improve health and access to health care. Through its programs, Community First hopes to shift the model of healthcare from reactively treating disease, to proactively caring for the health of every person on Hawai'i Island. For more information, please visit our website at www.communityfirsthawaii.org or Facebook and Instagram pages at [@communityfirsthawaii](https://www.facebook.com/communityfirsthawaii).