

## Hospice Foundation of America's Program

# FIVE CONVERSATIONS YOU'LL NAVIGATE IN DEMENTIA END-OF-LIFE CARE

### Online CE Course

#### DESCRIPTION

Deanna Rymaszewski will share practical interventions and strategies for clinicians facing common questions from patients, families, and caregivers:

1. Are they in pain?
2. Why aren't they eating?
3. They were fine last time I saw them – what happened?
4. Where is my spouse?
5. How much longer do they have?

#### PROGRAM DETAILS

The online presentation features an experienced professional offering their own expertise on the topic. On the screen, you will see the slide presentation and will be able to see and hear the expert presenters.

**RELEASE DATE:** Program originally premiered June 3, 2025

**ON DEMAND:** Viewing available to registered individuals for 6 months after purchase.

**LENGTH:** 90 minutes

**CE HOURS:** 1.5 hours

**CONTENT LEVEL:** The program is mainly for professionals already working in the field, but is practical for all levels of education – entry level, intermediate or advanced.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** The course is useful to Health care clinicians, social service clinicians and others working in the hospice, palliative care, counseling, hospital, nursing home, funeral home or faith community environments

#### HOW THE ONLINE COURSE WORKS

**Step 1** - Register/purchase the course

**Step 2** - View the course online through the link in your confirmation email or in your account.

**Step 3** – Complete the online exam and evaluation

#### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

A computer and reliable internet connection. Mobile service provider charges may apply.

#### REGISTRATION AND COURSE MATERIALS

Register directly online, on HFA's website: [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org).

**There are no refunds on registration.** \*Few exceptions may occur depending on the circumstance. To request a refund, a written request must be received (and granted) by HFA.

Course materials include the online program video, slides, and viewer guide. All course materials are accessible online immediately after registering.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THIS PROGRAM, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

1. Identify common concerns (pain, appetite, decline, disorientation, and prognosis) and responses caregivers and families express during end-of-life care for people living with dementia.

2. Apply communication strategies to respond compassionately and clearly to emotionally charged questions and requests.
3. Demonstrate person-centered approaches that support dignity, reduce suffering, and promote understanding around the dying process and dementia care

## **PROGRAM OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction (10 minutes)
  - a. Welcome
  - b. Need statement
  - c. Overview of presentation
  - d. **Activity:** Poll – Which question do you hear most frequently from a family of a person living with dementia?
- II. Are they in pain? (10 minutes)
  - a. Clinical context: how pain is experienced and expressed in late-stage dementia
  - b. Emotional context: Caregivers experiencing guilt for not recognizing, fear of the person living with dementia suffering
  - c. Strategies: observational pain scales, validation, normalization
- III. Why aren't they eating? (10 minutes)
  - a. Discussion of appetite decline, swallowing issues, risks
  - b. Emotional context: cultural values around feeding, comfort, connection, and love
  - c. Strategy: Reframing the question, gentle education
- IV. They were fine the last time I saw them – what happened? (10 minutes)
  - a. Review functional/cognitive decline in terminal dementia
  - b. Address grief and shock for long-distance or infrequent visitors
  - c. Strategies: stay ground, avoid defensive language, timeline language, and reflective listening
- V. Where is my spouse? (10 minutes)
  - a. Delirium versus long-term confusion
  - b. Strategies: Validation not correction, connected redirection
  - c. Staff burnout
- VI. How much longer do they have? (10 minutes)
  - a. Balancing honesty and uncertainty
  - b. Strategies: prognosis education with empathy
- VII. Integrating person-centered and trauma-informed approaches (15 minutes)
  - a. What does dignity look like?
  - b. Respect for the individual and their experiences
  - c. Listening for what's behind the question
- VIII. Q&A and Wrap-up (15 minutes)

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

This program is valid for 1.5 contact hours of continuing education. View the current list of board approvals on HFA's website at [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org), located on the program's registration page.

## **COURSE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS:**

Participants must view the entire 90-minute program (online-streaming video). Partial credit is not awarded. Participants must also complete the entire CE process online before a certificate is awarded. The online CE process includes a required evaluation form and exam. The exam must be completed at 80% or above (the exam may be re-taken, if necessary).

## **EXPERT SPEAKERS**

**Deanna Rymaszewski, MSW, APSW, APHSW-C**, is the Clinical Educator – Social Worker for Agrace Hospice Care, a not-for-profit hospice based in Fitchburg, WI that serves South Central Wisconsin. She has a Bachelor's degree in Spanish, with an emphasis in Hispanic Health and Human Services, and a Master's in Social Work. She is currently enrolled in the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program at Simmons University.

She has had the opportunity to work with diverse populations in Milwaukee and Madison as well as surrounding areas. She has experience working with the elderly, physically disabled, and terminally ill and their grieving families. Deanna has worked as a Social Worker, Bereavement Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator. In her current role, Deanna develops education on a wide range of end-of-life topics including advance directives, what to expect, dementia, grief, and bereavement. She presents to Agrace staff as well as the local community members and providers.

## REVIEWER

**Angela Novas, MSN, RN, CRNP**, *Senior Medical Officer*, Hospice Foundation of America

## BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES:

Buchbinder, M., & Berlinger, N. (2024). Opening the Door: Rethinking “Difficult Conversations” about Living and Dying with Dementia. *The Hastings Center Report*, 54(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/hast.1551>

Fetherston, A. A., Rowley, G., & Allan, C. L. (2018). Challenges in end-of-life dementia care. *Evidence-based mental health*, 21(3), 107–111. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2018-102889>

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), National Alliance for Care at Home, & National Association for Home Care & Hospice. (2024). NHPCO facts and figures. In *NHPCO Facts and Figures* (2024 EDITION) [Report]. <https://www.nhpc.org/wp-content/uploads/NHPCO-Facts-Figures-2024.pdf>

Sellars, M., Chung, O., Nolte, L., Tong, A., Pond, D., Fetherstonhaugh, D., McInerney, F., Sinclair, C., & Detering, K. M. (2018). Perspectives of people with dementia and carers on advance care planning and end-of-life care: A systematic review and thematic synthesis of qualitative studies. *Palliative Medicine*, 33(3), 274–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269216318809571>

Yeh, J. C., Newman, J., Main, R., & Hunt, L. J. (2021). Improving end-of-life care for persons living with dementia: Bereaved caregivers’ observations and recommendations. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 62(3), 579–586. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2021.01.133>

## COPYRIGHT NOTICE

**HFA’s program is copyrighted. Its use and dissemination is restricted and unauthorized duplication is strictly prohibited.** HFA strictly prohibits any other dissemination of this program by any method, including internal WAN or LAN computer networks or telemedicine networks.

**CE Certificates for this program may only be obtained through HFA.**

## SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITY (ADA)

Reasonable accommodation may be made available, on an individual basis. To request accommodation, please contact HFA via email at [educate@hospicefoundation.org](mailto:educate@hospicefoundation.org) or call 800-854-3402, or write to HFA, 1707 L Street NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20036.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Planners (Panelists and Reviewers) disclose no conflict of interest relative to this educational activity.

**FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR ADDRESSING GRIEVANCES**, please contact:

Hospice Foundation of America (HFA)

1707 L Street NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20036

[educate@hospicefoundation.org](mailto:educate@hospicefoundation.org)

1-800-854-3402 toll-free / (202) 457-5811 phone / (202) 457-5815 fax

**PRODUCED BY**

**Hospice Foundation of America**

*End-of-life Care Resources for Professionals and the Communities they Serve*

[www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org)

**THANK YOU TO OUR PROGRAM SPONSOR**

Presented by Dignity Memorial

**Dignity**<sup>®</sup>  
MEMORIAL

