

April 7, 1971

HOSPICE PLANNING GROUP
PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Introduction:

The philosophy of the projected Hospice evolves from our personal experiences with life and death and particularly our shared experiences over this past year -- experiences with patients whose remaining life time has been short and with their families, professionals, and all others close to the patient.

Our work during this exploratory period leads us to appreciate the therapeutic force made available to patients and their families when the individuals providing care are drawn together and motivated by a deep seated reverence for human life and its inherent struggles during crises.

The professional and scientific knowledge of nursing and medicine combined with this reverence for life and its spirit serves to help the staff understand the experiences of the patient and his family and to relieve their distress. We find that this type of care increases the capacity of the patient and his family to live through this period with meaning and dignity. It is important to discover the patient's and family's life style so that we can adapt to them and help them include this experience of dying and bereavement in their life, in their own way. The patient and his family, therefore, assume active roles in the decision making processes. They also become teachers for other patients and families and for staff members seeking to be more understanding and helpful during this moment of crisis in life experience. Thus, the work of the Hospice is shared among patients, families and staff, all cooperating in the caring task.

Persons helping terminally ill patients round out their lives expend tremendous energy; this needs replenishment. Patients and families help with this replenishment but since they come and go there is need to recognize the importance of the ongoing relations of the Hospice workers to one another. This is the Hospice "family", in its openness and concern for all members, is what sustains. It is necessary for all in the Hospice to be both strong and weak, giver and receiver, and to be strengthened by bonds between people and not only one's internal resources.

Our philosophy cannot be a creed and yet our explorations and growing bonds cause us to offer say, "We believe." We believe in honoring the creed and philosophy of every man. We believe in the dignity of personhood - patients, families, workers - and will nurture a spirit of respect for every person. We believe in the importance of feelings, in the fact that there are differences

between people to be creatively shared, in love which can be experienced between people and will support them. Some say, "We believe in God" in different ways, but important is that our daily work reflects a purpose that is beyond us and is moving us.

This philosophy cannot be concluded in words for it is one to be tested in action, to remain open to the learning that will come from our relationships with each other, and to be creatively changed and added to. Our serving, our teaching, our research will all add to our knowledge and may change our philosophy. But we are growing as a group and perhaps that will be a most important source of further change - the creativity that will come from our groups' mind which is greater than any of our single minds or from what we could call our group spirit.