

Choosing A Hospice

By: Maureen E. Hook, Ph.D.

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At the end of life, a hospice can provide soothing, tender care to your loved one or you yourself. However, this is a relatively new option in the spectrum of care options for the sick and/or infirm. So how does one go about choosing a hospice? Probably the best advice is to do some research before you need the service. The American Hospice Foundation is one such resource. It has been in existence since 1995, but it has had to end its services at the end of June 2014 because of a lack of funding. The good news, however, is that their website continues to exist and has a considerable library of materials available for free.

One of the first things to realize about hospice, says Naomi Naierman, the American Hospice Foundation's founding president and chief executive, is that there is a choice in hospices in most areas, especially urban areas. In the beginning, she says, all hospice care was of high quality and was staffed with those dedicated to help the dying. Now, as the industry has increased, in some cases, it has evolved into big business without having as much dedication to the consumer. So you have to do your homework. The Affordable Care Act requires public reporting about hospices, but unfortunately the data is not yet available to publish. Also, in the next few years, there should be hospice-compare information on the federal website of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

So what does one do without access to these internet tools? To start, she advises making an appointment to interview a couple of hospice providers and have them do an assessment. Some will even come to your home. Look for their friendliness and receptiveness. Also, ask how long the hospice has been in operation? One wants an organization that has been in existence for at least a year. Make sure you know what services they provide. What kind of staff provide the service--a nurse, an aide, or a volunteer? How long is the wait time before services can begin? What if the patient's condition suddenly deteriorates? Do they offer continuous care (7 days a week/24 hours per day) at the end of life? A recent Washington Post article reported that many don't offer the continuous care option. And finally, do they offer inpatient services at a facility should the dying person's condition require it? They might not have a specific building, but can they contract with other facilities to work together with a nursing home or rent some beds in a hospital to layer their services?

In the end, preparation is the key. Don't let the end of life take you by surprise.

(Paula Span, "How to Choose a Hospice," [The New York Times](#), June 18, 2014)



Kangaroo Tails

Hook Law Center: Kit Kat, how do kangaroos use their tails?

Kit Kat: Well, funny that you should ask. There is some new information on this very subject. The latest scientific data reveals that when kangaroos bound away at high speed, they use their tails very little and mostly for balance. However, according to Drs. Donelan and O'Connor of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, when they walk, they actually use their tail as a leg. Just like humans with 2 perfectly-performing legs, as one leg goes forward, the other pushes off. So it is with kangaroos--the tail actually exerts as much force as their other legs combined, and it is used to push off and propel the kangaroo forward.

You may ask of what use is this information? There doesn't appear to be any real, practical use. However, it contributes to our overall knowledge of locomotion. Also, we may have to change the definition of the word "leg." If a leg is an appendage used in walking, is not the kangaroo's tail a type of leg? We'll leave that to the scientists!

(James Gorman, "For Kangaroos, Tail Becomes a Fifth Leg," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2014 (Science section))

Upcoming Events

- Hook Law Center will be participating in **Senior Advocate's Art of Healthy Aging Series** held at Westminster Canterbury, 3100 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach VA 23451. This series will be held once a month from July through December. HLC Attorneys Andrew H. Hook, Jessica A. Hayes, and Shannon Laymon-Pecoraro will provide an overview of Hook Law Center's Practice Areas at the meetings held on **Tuesday, September 2, 2014 at 10:00 am**, **Tuesday, October 2, 2014 at 10:00 am**, **Tuesday, November 4, 2014 at 10:00 am**, and **Tuesday, December 2, 2014 at 10:00 am**. We look forward to seeing you there!
- Andrew H. Hook will be speaking to the Chesapeake Chapter of NARFE (National Active and Retired Federal Employees) on **September 2, 2014 at 12 Noon** at the Chesapeake General Hospital's Lifestyle, Health and Fitness Center.
- **Andrew H. Hook** has been invited to appear on a taping of "The Forum with Jan Callahan," a WHRO-produced public service program, to discuss the importance of attending the **Art of Healthy Aging Convention** at the **Virginia Beach Convention Center** on **November 1, 2014** and to discuss his seminar to be held during the convention. More details to come.
- **Andrew H. Hook** and **Shannon Laymon-Pecoraro** will be presenting a seminar on the Affordable Care Act to the Marcari Law Firm on **November 12, 2014 at Noon**.

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