

## Gilchrist Offers Informed Choices, Better Care for Elderly with Serious Illness

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*Even before hospice, there's Gilchrist.*

Hunt Valley, Md. – Gilchrist, the largest nonprofit provider of hospice services in Maryland and the recipient of the prestigious Circle of Life award from the American Hospital Association, aims to educate the public that Gilchrist is “more than hospice.”

Though Gilchrist is well known in the Baltimore region for its hospice services, the organization also provides medical and palliative care to people with serious illness months or even years before they are eligible for hospice.

Gilchrist has re-branded itself to better communicate how it can meet the needs of people with serious illness, such as cancer, heart disease or lung disease. “Even before hospice, there’s Gilchrist,” is part of a push to better communicate how it can meet the needs of people as they age.

It’s a segment of the population that has traditionally been underserved. Older people living with serious illness often find themselves in an unending cycle of health crises that lead from home to the hospital to rehabilitation and back home again. This lack of coordinated care results in not only poorer health outcomes, but also billions of dollars of health care costs.

To meet the needs of these individuals and their caregivers, Gilchrist provides elder medical care and support to people at home or their assisted living or residential care community. Nurse practitioners visit them regularly, treating their symptoms and managing medications, which in many cases, have previously been prescribed by multiple specialists with no overall coordination.

Patients have access to nurses day or night, and in some cases, are monitored virtually through a wireless cuff. If a blood pressure reading or other vital sign is outside a normal range, a nurse can immediately call.

With this type of coordinated care, all of a person’s medical needs can be met, resulting in improved quality of life and fewer unnecessary hospitalizations. Care delivered in the home is especially helpful for those who have difficulty traveling to doctors’ appointments.

Gilchrist specialists also offer guidance on treatment options and end-of-life planning—explaining the likely progression of the illness and helping patients document their care wishes before it’s too late. Other services include volunteer support, counseling for caregivers, and assistance with finding useful community resources.

Gilchrist's expansion of services is in response to a nationwide trend to help meet the health care needs of an aging population. According to the National Council on Aging, 77 percent of adults 65 and older have two or more chronic conditions.

"As the population ages, more and more people are struggling to cope with a serious illness or with care for an aging parent," said Cathy Hamel, Gilchrist's president. "We want people to know that Gilchrist is here to meet their needs, whether guiding them through their treatment options, providing medical care at their home or residential care community or helping them navigate the health care system."

Gilchrist, an affiliate of GBMC, opened in 1994 and now serves thousands of individuals and families throughout Central Maryland through counseling and support, elder medical care and hospice. Care is provided at home, at residential community centers and at Gilchrist's three inpatient centers in Towson, Howard County and Baltimore. Gilchrist provides coordinated, compassionate care at every stage of serious illness, with the goal of helping people live life to the fullest, on their own terms.

Each year, Gilchrist provides elder medical care to 7,500 individuals, hospice care to 5,400 and grief counseling and bereavement services to 6,500. The organization also counsels people on advance care planning, guiding them through decisions about their treatment and helping them make informed choices about their end-of-life care.

## ABOUT GILCHRIST

Gilchrist is a nationally recognized, nonprofit leader in serious illness and end-of-life care. With elder medical care, counseling and hospice, we help people at every stage of serious illness live life to the fullest and make informed choices about their care. Since 1994, the organization has served thousands of individuals throughout Central Maryland—in homes, in skilled nursing and residential care communities, and at our three inpatient hospice centers in Towson, Howard County and Baltimore. Gilchrist is accredited by CHAP (Community Health Accreditation Partner), and is a recipient of the prestigious Circle of Life award from the American Hospital Association. For more information about Gilchrist, visit [gilchristcares.org](http://gilchristcares.org).

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