



OUR NEW PATIENT-CENTRED BENEFIT OFFERS EXTRA CARE AND SUPPORT IF YOU ARE DIAGNOSED WITH SERIOUS CANCER.

Dear Member,

At POLMED, we understand that facing a serious illness diagnosis, like cancer, can be scary and overwhelming.

That's why we've partnered with Alignd and introduced a new benefit that offers extra care when you need it most. We're proud to be one of the first medical schemes in South Africa to offer our members this kind of ongoing support from diagnosis of serious cancer.

We'd like to tell you about this added benefit in care and support, provided by our partner, **Alignd**.



WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS PATIENT CENTRED PROGRAM?

We want to support you to live well while you're managing a serious illness. The POLMED Palliative Care Program offers specialised care for anyone with a serious illness like cancer, focusing on providing relief from symptoms and stress. This could be by controlling a physical problem such as pain, or it could be by helping you with your emotional, social or spiritual needs. This benefit supports you and your family.



WHO HAS ACCESS TO THIS NEW PROGRAM?

If you're a POLMED member on any option who has been diagnosed with serious illness e.g. cancer, you'll immediately have access to the Alignd Serious Illness Benefit, at no extra cost to you.



WOULD I HAVE TO CHANGE MY TREATMENT PLAN OR DOCTOR?

No, this extra care is provided by the specially trained team of doctors, nurses and other professionals who work together with your treating doctors such as your oncologist and GP. You can receive this extra layer of support while you are having curative treatment. It's a team approach that puts you back in control of your illness journey, and can really improve the quality of your life when you most need it.



WHO WILL PROVIDE THIS CARE AND SUPPORT?

This care and support is provided by an expert team, which could include doctors, nurses and social workers. These practitioners have extra palliative care training, which means they are skilled in making patients' illness journeys easier from the moment they are diagnosed, ideally with a focus on getting them back on their feet again. What makes this team special is that they will consider and co-ordinate all aspects of your health, and not just the illness.

Some people feel nervous when they hear the word palliative, but accepting this kind of care does not mean you are dying, or that you're giving up. You won't have to change your current treatment plan or doctor either.



WHY WOULD I NEED THIS PROGRAM?

Patients with a serious illness consistently report finding more comfort and support with a trained palliative care team on their side than without it. With better all-round care, symptom management, and a comprehensive and holistic home-based care plan in place, patients are less likely to require emergency services, hospitalisation and ICU stays. Family members feel more supported too.

We encourage people who are living with cancer but are, on a day-to-day basis, healthy and living independently, to opt into the benefit. The support can be tailored to meet the individual needs of each patient. For example, some people feel it's important to put a living will in place, but are not sure where to start. Palliative care doctors can assist you with talking about and documenting your end-of-life wishes in an advance care plan.



WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM INCLUDE?

For those with serious illness support needs, we cover an initial consultation with a palliative care trained doctor to assess your needs holistically – beyond your treatment alone. Counselling for you and your family is included, as is putting in place an advance healthcare plan or living will. As part of the Ongoing Program, monthly follow-up consultations with the involved palliative care multi-disciplinary team including the doctor, registered nurse and social worker as clinically appropriate, are also covered so you're supported throughout your treatment journey.

Should your illness be more progressed, the POLMED Palliative Care Program offers more intensive support, including home-based palliative care, medication for symptom relief, hospital bed-hire, and limited home-based care (336 hours in total) at the end of life (this is not a replacement for frail care).



MUST I PAY EXTRA FOR IT?

No, the Palliative Care Program is a comprehensive care program available to all eligible POLMED beneficiaries, at no extra cost. We provide cover for our members to receive meaningful physical and emotional support from when they are diagnosed with with a serious cancer. The benefit is also available to members with other serious illnesses who can benefit from palliative care, such as major organ failure, and on a case-by-case basis. For those with more intensive care needs, the benefit also covers end-of-life care.



HOW WOULD I ACCESS THIS BENEFIT?

You are not automatically enrolled on the program – there is an enrolment process to access the extra support benefits that are available to you. Here's what you can do:



Contact us directly at referrals@alignd.co.za, even if you just want to find out more about the program.



Expect an Alignd Care Enrolment Partner to reach out to you, and take you through the benefits and enrolment process. You can ask them any questions you might have.

We wish you all the best, and hope that you will consider making use of this benefit available to you.

Regards,
POLMED

