

Palliative Care and COVID-19

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Disclosures

- I have no financial relationships with commercial entities producing healthcare-related products and/or services

Objectives

- To review the role of Palliative Care in the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic
- To highlight some of the unique Palliative Care needs of IHS patients

Definition

“Palliative care is **specialized medical care** for people living with a **serious illness**. This type of care is focused on providing **relief from the symptoms and stress** of the illness. The goal is to improve **quality of life** for both the **patient and the family.**”

- Center to Advance Palliative Care

Palliative Care in COVID-19

- COVID-19 is a serious, life-threatening illness in some patients
- Older patients, those with underlying health conditions at at higher risk
- Key goals
 - Symptom management
 - Clarifying goals of care
 - Supporting patients and families

Outpatient setting

- Focus on medically complex patients, especially those in congregate settings
- Clarify goals of care and wishes surrounding hospital admission, ventilation, resuscitation
 - Scripts can be helpful
 - <https://www.capc.org/toolkits/covid-19-response-resources/>
- Encourage patients to identify a health care proxy
- Update advanced care planning documentation
 - EHR and state-specific forms
- Know your local hospices' capabilities
- Consider outpatient comfort pack order sets if hospice unavailable

Documenting outpatient discussions

- Code status added to problem list
- New Mexico MOST form filled out when possible
- Advance directive note written in EHR:

Discussed GOC in two subsequent telemedicine visits. Phyllis interpreted.

Goals: Remain active. Enjoys travel, sewing, doing work around the house.

Health Care Proxy: daughter AL

Explained goal of living as long as possible vs. focusing on maximizing function and helping her live as well as possible. Patient stated she would not want to be dependent on machines at this point in her life.

Code status: DNR/DNI requested by patient

Hospital admission would be consistent with goals of care at this time.

Inpatients

- Clarify and document goals of care
 - Ensure information carried over when patients are transferred
- Manage symptoms
 - Dyspnea
 - Pain
 - Nausea
- Support patients and their families
 - Distance, visitation restrictions, guilt about transmitting the illness, grief, fear
 - Multidisciplinary team

GIMC Palliative Care interventions

- Nurse helping identify inpatients with high symptom needs
- 24/7 staffing by Palliative Care physicians
- Reflection Area
 - Family meetings and visits using donated iPads
 - Family comes to area outside GIMC
- Sharing resources with hospitalists
 - Symptom management
 - Communication tips and scripts
- Bluetooth speakers to amplify sound for patients



GIMC Reflection Area



Dr. Vaughn doing an iPad visit in the ICU

Challenges unique to IHS

- Many high risk patients
- Patients transferred far from home
- High infection rates in Navajo Area
- Tribe-specific cultural considerations
- Lack of Palliative Care services
- Lack of hospice services
- Limited access to Wi-Fi/smart phones/cell service

Communication challenges

- These conversations are hard!
- Most of us aren't trained in this
- Language challenges
- Cultural considerations

Communication tips

- Ask patients how they want to receive information
- Ask permission to talk about certain topics
- Find out what is most important to the patient
- Express hope
- Respond to emotion rather than talk past it
- Ask permission to make a recommendation
- Practice and get feedback
- Offer medical interpreter

Resources

- Center to Advance Palliative Care
 - Communication scripts, symptom management protocols, online trainings, resources for starting a Palliative Care program
- Navajo Area
 - Conversation scripts for Navajo patients
 - Collaboration between GIMC and UNM
 - <https://rise.articulate.com/share/yRtG1KTo14vBAtCkhJvZQtAxpW5rEWIM#/>

Resources

- Alaska Area
 - Chris Piromalli MD, Southcentral Foundation, Alaska
 - Advance Care Planning Scripting and EHR Auto Texts
 - Advance Care Planning Resources - <https://anthc.org/palliative-care/resources/>
 - Comfort Pack Guidance (Modified from CAPC Resources)
 - Conversation scripts for Native Alaskan patients
 - cpiromalli@southcentralfoundation.com
- Cherokee Indian Hospital
 - Blythe Winchester, MD, Cherokee Indian Hospital
 - Advanced care planning in the nursing home setting

Ahéhee'!



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