

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

Hospice/Palliative Care and Covid-19

Lessons Learned during a Pandemic

“I think for all of us this felt like the most unnatural thing we ever experience in our careers, because the medicine that is given for people who are taking their last breath is primarily the hand of someone who loves them.”

Chaplain Maria McLain Cox

Lessons Learned during a Pandemic

- ▶ The Importance of Advance Care Planning and Advanced Directives
- ▶ The Role of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Mental and Physical Health
- ▶ The Role of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Patient and Family Grief
- ▶ How to Safely and Effectively Care for Patients (1/4-1/3 of all patients in an acute care hospital qualify for palliative care or hospice care.)

Advance Care Planning

- ▶ Advanced Care Planning - Its goal is to help adults at any age and stage of health understand and share their personal values, life goals and preferences regarding future medical care.
- ▶ 2 major review articles concluded ACP “improved end-of-life communication, documentation of care preferences, dying in preferred place and health savings” and concluded the “outcomes for all ACP interventions were predominantly positive.”
- ▶ ACP has been shown to significantly increase knowledge of EOL wishes of patients and significantly reduced stress, anxiety and depression in family members

Advanced Care Planning and Advanced Directives

► Four types of Advance Directives

Medical Power of Attorney*

Advanced Directive to Physicians(Living Will)*

Out of Hospital DNR

In Hospital DNR

► * Covered by the Federal 1990 Patient Self-Determination Act

Curves Pneumonic for Medical Decision Making Capacity

- ▶ C-Choose and Communicate
- ▶ U-Understand
- ▶ R-Reason
- ▶ V-Value
- ▶ E-Emergency
- ▶ S-Surrogate

Chest Vol 137, Issue 2, P421-427 Feb 1,2010

The Role of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Mental and Physical Health

- ▶ Social isolation is defined as the absence of social interactions, contacts and relationships with family, friends and society at large
- ▶ Social isolation is an independent risk factor from loneliness and depression
- ▶ Social isolation increases mortality as much as moderate smoking and higher than those with obesity and hypertension.

The Role of Isolation and Loneliness in Mental and Physical Health

Loneliness increases the risk of CAD by 29% and stroke by 32% in match controls

Loneliness and social isolation increase risk of contracting some cancers and decreases survival in cancer patients

Mortality decreased by 41% in diabetics moderately supported from social isolation and 55% in a well-supported group

The Role of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Mental and Physical Health

- ▶ Biological pathways have been suggested as the etiology of the adverse effect on human physiology
- ▶ Loneliness and social isolation have been found to alter autonomic, endocrine and immune function
- ▶ Loneliness increases the likelihood of individual initiating harmful behaviors such as excess alcohol consumption, overeating and smoking
- ▶ Loneliness has been associated with biomarkers of inflammation(interleukin-6, fibrinogen and C-reactive protein.)

The Role of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Patient and Family Grief

- ▶ The experience of the loss of a family member is one of the most stressful events in life
- ▶ Social Isolation from dying patients during Covid-19 lockdowns prevented many families from having proper goodbyes, funerals and burials
- ▶ Social Isolation during death of a loved one has created an irregular grief cycle that will lead to an increase in complicated and prolonged grief among many survivors
- ▶ Complicated grief can lead to marked increases in suicide, drug and alcohol use, aggression, lack of productivity and physical health issues

The Role of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Patient and Family Grief

► Four things that matter most and need to be said before death:

I love you

Forgive me/I forgive you

Thank you

Goodbye

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Lessons Learned from the Pandemic Experience

- ▶ The importance of Advanced Care Planning verses Crisis Intervention
- ▶ Balanced the health risk of disease transmission verses that of social isolation and loneliness
- ▶ Earlier involvement hospice and palliative care when appropriate to add an extra layer of care
- ▶ Use of videoconferencing and PPE to allow access of families to their loved ones in Long Term Care facilities and hospitals
- ▶ Advocate for streamlining nursing documentation to allow for more in-person interaction in hospital and LTC facilities

Lessons Learned from the Pandemic Experience

- ▶ Plan for Pandemic Units within LTC facilities with dedicated staff
- ▶ Address the whole patient-physical, emotional, and spiritual
- ▶ Greater emphasis on palliative care vs specialized palliative care
- ▶ Use of palliative care as a bridge to communication to families
- ▶ Earlier transition to in-person visits when safety is assessed(risk of Covid transmission by health care worker to patients with adequate PPE <1%.}
- ▶ Focusing nursing care on direct patient care and suspending some of the unnecessary documentation burden

Lessons Learned from the Pandemic

Importance of emotionally supporting healthcare workers

Stress Management

Peer Support with Wellness Rounds

Access to Mental Health Resources

Cross Training of Nursing Personal

Team Culture