

## A BRIEF LOOK AT - CARE OF THE DYING PATIENT



The Agency wants all of the employees to provide appropriate care to meet the needs of the dying patient and his/her caregiver(s). The patient should be allowed to die with the optimal level of comfort and dignity according to his/her requests concerning death. This includes knowing whether or not Advance Directives including an out-of-hospital do not resuscitate order are in place.



Furthermore, all Agency staff should be sensitive to the unique needs of the dying patient and his caregiver. Care should be respectful and responsive to the patient's needs.

### **Interventions/care will include but are not limited to:**

- ▣ assess and care to facilitate the management of pain and symptoms by documenting patient's statements of level of pain;
- ▣ assess and care to manage and/or prevent other symptoms such as nausea/vomiting;
- ▣ care to address the psychosocial, emotional and spiritual concerns of the patient/caregiver regarding dying and grieving;
- ▣ respect the patient's cultural beliefs about dying;
- ▣ help the patient express his/her thoughts and feelings;
- ▣ help the patient to maintain as much independence as possible;
- ▣ make appropriate referrals to meet patient's needs; and,
- ▣ monitor the patient's response to interventions/care.



The patient is probably grieving for the inevitability of loss and death and will go through the stages of grieving: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Know what the dying patient wants and be prepared to help him/her. Research tells us that they want:

- ▣ Empathetic Presence - someone to listen, recognize feelings and be supportive of the patient's uniqueness.
- ▣ Teacher/Expert - nurse demonstrates technical skill and shares knowledge in an honest and understandable manner.
- ▣ Acknowledges the normalcy of experiencing episodes of grief-related feelings.



- ▣ Ongoing invitations to participate in their healthcare.
- ▣ Pain and symptom control.
- ▣ A desire not to be a burden.
- ▣ Not to be left alone (at least not most of the time).

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**QUIZ**

1. The patient should be allowed to die with the optimal level of comfort and dignity.  
 True  
 False
2. Care should be respectful and responsive to the patient's needs.  
 True  
 False
3. Since the patient is dying anyway, it is not important to refer him/her to other support groups.  
 True  
 False
4. Dying patients want pain and symptom control.  
 True  
 False

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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**ANSWER KEY**

1. TRUE
2. TRUE
3. FALSE
4. TRUE