## End of Life Care Services

- **Hospice:** Providing COMFORT and emotional support to terminally ill (certified < 6 months to live).
- Provided in-home or homelike setting (facility).
- Key Component: Quality of life is maintained and family members may be active participants in care.

- **Palliative Care:** Interdisciplinary patient centered approach to symptom management.
- Focused on relief of suffering and improving quality of life for patients and their families.
- Helping patients determine goals of care and/or end of life care wishes.

## Code Status Designations

- **DNR:** Provider order to not attempt CPR during cardiopulmonary arrest.
- **DNHCC:** Interventions identified as “will not” are withheld, all other treatments are provided.
- **DNHCCA:** Order effective only during a cardiopulmonary arrest, until then, all medical care provided including intubation.
- **LST:** Documented, personalized, proactive care choices or preferences, including any options to treat or reverse treatment.

## End-of-Life Care for the In-Patient

### Nursing: Symptomatic Care

- **Private Room:** close to nurses station.
- Collaborate with physician and family regarding symptoms and compassionate care visitation.
- Clarify religious beliefs and potential chaplain preferences.
- Stay near - watch for air hunger/dyspnea, delirium, pain or hygiene needs.
- Turn and reposition frequently to decrease secretions.
- May administer oxygen, CPAP, or BIPAP. Discontinue if patient begins pulling at oxygenn.
- If necessary (no IV and unable to use buccal mucosa), can use Macy rectal catheter for med administration.
- Contact other providers - if going home, hospice, home health. If unexpected, contact physician/APRN/PA.
- At time of death contact provider for announcement of death.
- Follow county/state protocols for medical examiner or coroner cases that require autopsy.
- Contact LIFE BANC within one hour of death.
- Clarify family has been notified, if not at bedside.

### Care Assistant:

- Remove unused equipment from room, and make space for family.
- Provide clean bed linens, frequently monitor hygiene.
- Provide bath and fresh linen at time of death.
- Follow agency policies for body identification.
- Move body into bag for morgue after family visit is complete.
- Veteran: Drape body with American flag prior to transport to morgue (REMEMBER: Flag cannot touch the ground at any time).

### Protocols

- Frequently round to ensure proper hygiene, medication administration and family needs.
- Maintain open and ongoing communication.
- Explain all care, even if the patient is unresponsive.
- Watch for mottling of toes and fingers.
- Gastrointestinal symptoms: Do not force the patient to eat or drink (anorexia and/or bulimia).
- GI systems slow as blood is shunted away.
- Force feeding or pushing fluids via stomach tubes may result in distention, increased pain and delirium.
- Motility slows, carefully monitor for bowel impaction.
- Terminal congestion may occur with excess oropharyngeal secretions.
- Known as “death rattle”, patient is not aware.
- Elevate the head of bed at least 45 degrees unless contraindicated.
- Turn and reposition every two hours to allow secretions to drain down esophagus by gravity.
- May use mouth suction, avoid deep suctioning or nasal suctioning.
- Educate family on source and treatment.
- Oxygen may be offered as a comfort, do not insist on use if patient appears uncomfortable.

### Common Care at End of Life

- Terminal restlessness/delirium.
- Find cause (check for impaction, pain, or hypoxemia).
- Frequently round on patient to assure safety, do not restrain, can increase symptoms.
- Communicate all care, use reassuring voice, gentle touch and/or calming music.
- Educate and reassure family, usually metabolic failure.

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**References:**
- American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine - [https://aaahpm.com](https://aaahpm.com)
- Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services - [https://www.cms.gov](https://www.cms.gov)
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization - [https://www.NHPCC.org](https://www.NHPCC.org)
- Veterans Administration - [https://www.va.gov](https://www.va.gov)