

# Palliative Care for Patients in the Last Hours of Life in the ED

## Meeting the Patient's Needs

### Physical

- Anticipatory Meds (see Medication)
- Assess for; Pain, Agitation, Dyspnoea, Respiratory Secretions, and Nausea.
- Mouth Care

### Social

- Patient's preferred place of death.  
*If appropriate, facilitate discharge home by liaising with Palliative Care.*

### Psychological

- Anything that would be important to this individual in the last hours of life.

### Spiritual

- Ask if religion or spirituality is important to them and if they would like to speak to a chaplain.  
*Multi-faith chaplaincy is contactable via switchboard. If Roman Catholic, ask for the Roman Catholic chaplain directly to allow last rites to be delivered. They aim to respond to emergency call outs within 45 minutes.*

## Communication

- Involve the patient, if possible, and family members in discussions.
- Don't be afraid to use the word dying - clear communication is best.
- Check for an advance care plan/ ReSPECT form.
- Be aware of capacity/power of attorney - health not finance.
- If withdrawing treatment, explain clearly what this means.  
*i.e. Removal of treatments and monitoring equipment.*

## Medication

- **Pain:** Morphine\*  
2.5-5mg SC hourly PRN
- **Dyspnoea:** Morphine  
2.5-5mg SC 4 hourly PRN
- **Agitation:** Midazolam  
2.5-5 mg SC hourly PRN
- **Secretions:** Glycopyrronium  
0.2mg SC 4 hourly PRN
- **Nausea:** Haloperidol  
1.5mg SC 4 hourly PRN

### If eGFR < 30

- **Pain & Dyspnoea:** Oxycodone  
1.25-2.5mg SC hourly PRN

*If 3 or more doses are used within 4 hours, seek advice from Palliative Care.*

*\*If already taking opiates, use 1/6 of patient's total 24 hour dose. If converting from one form of opiate to another, seek specialist advice.*

## Contacting Palliative Care

### Urgent Advice

*e.g. Patient Discharge*

- RSCH (09:00-17:00)  
*Page 8420, ext 3021.*
- RSCH (OOH)  
*Call Martlett's via switchboard.*
- PRH (09:00-17:00)  
*Page 8420, ext 3021.*
- PRH (OOH)  
*Call St Peter's or St James' via switchboard.*

### Non-Urgent Advice

*e.g. Referral to Palliative Care*

- Complete Bamboo form.
- Select Palliative Care on symphony as referred specialty.