

KEYWORDS: ISOLATION; WELLBEING; MENTAL HEALTH; GOALS OF CARE; SUPPORT MECHANISMS

DESCRIPTION

Per the NCP (2018), an interdisciplinary approach to psychological and psychiatric care is critical, including social work assessments across settings and specialist psychological and/or psychiatric care as needed. These aspects of care have several implications in clarifying goals of care, eliciting family involvement, addressing complex family dynamics and conflict, and ensuring appropriate support.



COVID-19 CONCERNS



- Social isolation has exacerbated existing mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, requiring ongoing specialist input and ongoing assessment
- Fear, worry, and other distress associated with COVID-19 has sparked new mental health challenges
- Family dynamics may have become more complex in the context of cumulative loss and grief
- Mental health support may be required long-term beyond hospitalization; consider a plan upstream in hospitalization to promote continuity and coordination of care at discharge

ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- What is this patient's mental health history? Have they consulted with psychology, psychiatry, or social work at this institution in the past?
- Worries, concerns, or feelings about cancer or treatment may have changed or affected new perspectives on life, death, and the meaning of illness in the patient's life
- Consider that in a family-centered model, the mental health and wellbeing of family caregivers is also critical to address in the long-term care of the patient and at home



QUESTIONS FOR PATIENT/FAMILY



- We are hearing that COVID-19 is really impacting our patients and their families. Can you tell me about how it is affecting your mental health? How has it affected your sense of wellbeing?
- Have you experienced any losses of family members or loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic? How do you cope? Where do you find support? Who do you turn to?
- Do you feel you would benefit at this time from additional mental health support from our [social workers, psychologists, psychiatry team, etc.]?
- For patients with existing mental health challenges: Have you noticed that your [depression, anxiety, etc.] has gotten worse during this experience? How have you managed that? Who have you spoken to about it?

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE

- Many patients will appreciate the opportunity to address their mental health experience during COVID-19. Continue to normalize and validate their experiences.
- Consider the high mortality rates associated with COVID-19 in vulnerable populations; identify grief and bereavement services and support mechanisms for family caregivers in the event that this patient dies during this hospitalization or in the near future.



RELATED RESOURCES



- Oncology Nursing Society. (2020). Psychosocial Support for Patients with Cancer During COVID-19. Available at: <https://voice.ons.org/news-and-views/psychosocial-support-for-patients-with-cancer-during-covid-19>
- Rodin G et al. (2020). The Psychological and Social Implications of physical isolation for Patients and Families During the Coronavirus Pandemic – Briefing Note. Global Palliative Care and Covid-19 Series. Available at: <http://globalpalliativecare.org/covid-19/uploads/briefing-notes/briefing-note-the-psychological-and-social-implications-of-physical-isolation-for-patients-and-families-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.pdf>

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