Importance of Advance Care Planning & End of Life Communications with Cancer Patients in Global COVID-19 Pandemic: Practical Tips for Oncology Advanced Practice Providers

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Background
Cancer patients can have altruistic goals including feeling free to express themselves using unrestrained and honest talk, especially towards the end of life. Advance care planning discussions can also focus on patients’ values and goals of care, including patient’s freedom to choose their place of death are respected.

Advance Care Planning, including end of life care discussions are often delayed, and are not initiated early in patients’ cancer trajectory. As a result, patient’s wishes often remains unknown until the last phase of their life.

Problem
Without an advance care planning & end of life care discussions, patients’ wishes remains unknown, resulting in cancer patients’ inappropriate receiving aggressive cancer trajectory near the end-of-life, which does lead to higher resource utilization, decreased quality of life, and increased cost of care.

In addition, the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is challenging health care systems worldwide and raising important ethical issues, especially the potential need for rationing health care in the context of scarce resources & crisis capacity.

Methods-Lit. Search
A comprehensive literature search was conducted using the key words: Advance care planning discussions, end of life care, end of life communications, advanced practice providers, COVID-19 and Advance Care Planning.

Search Engines: CINAHL, Medline, Pub Med, Google Scholar

Key Points
- Develop communication in the outpatient setting before a crisis
- Identify patient at risk
- Use checklist conversation guide
- Non Verbal Strategies

References


Non Verbal Strategies
- Create an appropriate environment
  - To help patient feel safe and comfortable
    - Ensure Privacy
    - Prevent interruptions
    - Avoid noise
    - Remove public barriers
- Make appropriate eye contact
  - To help feel at ease
- Encourage families and patients to
  - Share Prognosis tailored to information
  - Focus on goals and values about care
  - Use checklist conversation guide
- Non Verbal Strategies
  - Use short words and sentences
  - Avoid jargon
  - Avoid use of ‘if’ or ‘but’
  - Avoid medical jargon
  - Use open ended questions
  - Be comfortable with silence

Recommended

Oncology APPs have the ability to improve advance care planning & end-of-life discussions

Verbal Strategies
- Use short words and sentences
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