



Advice for Physicians Caring for Dying Patients

Patients and families report being frequently confused by medical jargon.

Try not to use complex terms or euphemisms. Be gentle and straightforward with language such as, “I believe we are approaching your final weeks, let’s discuss where and how you would like to spend this time.”

Be familiar with the legal and ethical policies at the facility where your patient is receiving care and the state laws related to end-of-life care. Certain issues such as withdrawal of treatment are sometimes misunderstood.

Hospital, hospice or community ethics committees can serve as a resource in the event you have questions or concerns about a specific situation.

Understand the local resources available to help the patient and family, such as hospice, palliative care, disease-specific organizations, aging services providers and patient/family support groups.

“... if peace and dignity are what we delude ourselves to expect, most of us will die wondering what we, or our doctors, have done wrong.”

SHERWIN NULAND, M.D. Author of *How We Die*.

National Hospice and Palliative Care
Organization

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