



COMMUNICATION



COVID EMERGENCY

Tips for compassionate communication

with patients who are deteriorating and their families

You are a caring clinician, your quiet presence and small acts of kindness are meaningful. Take calming breaths and use silence. Use your own words, these are just tips to support you.

with the PATIENT

With the patient **Avoid sentences** **such as**



“There is nothing more we can do for you.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll die quietly and peacefully with these drugs.”

“These drugs will let you die without suffering.”

“You must be strong for your family.”

With the patient **RECOMMENDED** **expressions**



*“Hello,
(address the person by name),
I am... (introduce yourself by Name, Occupation,
Duty)*

*...I will do my best to look after you and will
take care of you...”*

*“I hear your anxiety/fear/desperation...
(name emotion). Would you like to tell me
more about what you are feeling?”*

*“We will not abandon you. We will keep
trying to help you to be comfortable”*

*“I am so sorry that your loved ones cannot
be around you, but you are not alone, we
are here, we will stay with you.”*

*“Even though your family cannot visit, they
are close to you. They call every day to find
out how you are, and we make sure we talk
to them.”*

*“Is there something I can get for you?”
“Is there someone I can call?”*

with the FAMILY

When on the phone
to the family

**Avoid sentences
such as**



DO NOT introduce yourself in an
impersonal way:

“Hi, I’m the doctor on duty.”

Never refer impersonally to the patient:

“A patient in this stage of covid...”

DO NOT say:

***“There is nothing more we can do for
your father/mother/etc.”***

“We are withdrawing care.”

***“Don’t worry, your father/mother/etc.
will die peacefully with these drugs.”***

***“These drugs will let him or her die
without suffering.”***

When on the phone
to the family

**RECOMMENDED
expressions**



Introduce yourself by your full name and role:

***“I’m so sorry that we cannot meet in
person to talk about [name of patient].”***

Try to provide information in chunks and leave time for
the person to respond:

***“I hear your
anxiety/fear/desperation...(name
emotion)...that is very reasonable.”***

***“I wish it wasn’t so, and I’m sorry to have to
tell you this.”***

***“...his/her condition is deteriorating...
I am so sorry”.***

***“I wish that there was more that I could do to
change what is happening.”***

***“The breathing machine is no longer helping
and we will remove it but we will not stop
caring for [name of patient]...”***

***“Although we do not have any way to prolong
her life we will keep working to ensure [name
of patient] does not suffer.”***

***“We will keep doing our best to prevent any
suffering...”***

***“...he will be comfortable and won’t feel pain
or breathlessness...”***

“...[name of patient] will not be alone”