Checklist Tool Developed to Identify Patients in Need of Palliative Care During Hospitalization

Michele Diaz Aboud

Components Of Assessment
- Pain/symptom assessment
- Social/spiritual assessment
- Determination of patient understanding of illness, prognosis trajectory, and treatment options
- Identification of patient-centered goals of care
- Post-discharge transition of care

Based on a review of the literature and current practices, two checklists, each with two sets of criteria, were identified to trigger a basic palliative care assessment by the primary treatment team. [See sidebar, right.] “Primary” criteria are global indicators representing the minimum expected standard of care; “secondary” criteria are more specific, designed to be used by hospitals whose systems can incorporate them. The Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) is a national, non-profit organization providing hospitals and other health care settings with the resources needed to develop and sustain successful palliative care programs. Their web address is www.capc.org.

EXTENDING PALLIATIVE CARE BEYOND DISCHARGE


Recent findings that palliative care patients often report a lack of supportive information upon hospital discharge concern von Gunten, however. He urges that primary care physicians and specialists alike extend the reach of palliative care by working to ensure smooth transitions between care settings.

“[C]ommunicating clearly, in speech and in writing, in language the patient and family understand, about their condition and the treatment plan is a fundamental skill for all managing services,” writes von Gunten.

“Palliative medicine can’t be the only group who know how to talk about prognosis, pain medications, and whom to call for help.”

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Source: “Identifying Patients in Need of a Palliative Care Assessment in the Hospital Setting: A Consensus Report from the Center to Advance Palliative Care,” Journal of Palliative Medicine; January 2011; 14(1):17-23. Weissman DE, Meier DE; Medical College of Wisconsin/Froedtert Hospital, Milwaukee; Department of Geriatrics and Internal Medicine, Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York City. “Who Should Palliative Medicine Be Asked to See?” ibid.; p. 2; von Gunten CF; editor-in-chief, Journal of Palliative Medicine.

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