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† Medical Oncology
Π Internal medicine
£ Supportive Care including Palliative and Pain Management
° Psychiatry, psychology, including health behavior
ψ Neurology/neuro-oncology
φ Anesthesiology

Continue
# Table of Contents

- NCCN Palliative Care Panel Members
- Definition and Standards of Palliative Care (PAL-1)
- Palliative Care Overview (PAL-2)
- Palliative Care Assessment (PAL-3)
- Early Consultation With Palliative Care Specialist (PAL-6)
- Benefits and Risks of Anticancer Therapy (PAL-7)
- Symptoms: Pain (PAL-8)
- Symptoms: Dyspnea (PAL-9)
- Symptoms: Anorexia/Cachexia (PAL-11)
- Symptoms: Nausea and Vomiting (PAL-13)
- Symptoms: Constipation (PAL-15)
- Symptoms: Malignant Bowel Obstruction (PAL-16)
- Symptoms: Delirium (PAL-18)
- Psychosocial Distress (PAL-20)
- Goals and Expectations Affecting Care (PAL-22)
- Advance Care Planning (PAL-24)
- Special Palliative Care Interventions (PAL-27)
- Imminently Dying Patient (PAL-28)
- Palliative Sedation (PAL-29)
- After Death Care (PAL-30)

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DEFINITION OF PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care is both a philosophy of care and an organized, highly structured system for delivering care to persons with life-threatening or debilitating illness. Palliative care is patient and family-centered care that focuses upon effective management of pain and other distressing symptoms, while incorporating psychosocial and spiritual care according to patient/family needs, values, beliefs, and culture(s). The goal of palliative care is to prevent and relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for patients and their families, regardless of the stage of the disease or the need for other therapies. Palliative care can be delivered concurrently with life-prolonging care or as the main focus of care.

STANDARDS OF PALLIATIVE CARE

- All cancer patients should be screened for palliative care needs at their initial visit, at appropriate intervals, and as clinically indicated.
- Patients and families should be informed that palliative care is an integral part of their comprehensive cancer care.
- Palliative care should be delivered based upon clinical practice guidelines.
- Educational programs should be provided to all healthcare professionals and trainees so that they can develop effective palliative care knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- Skilled, palliative care specialists and interdisciplinary, palliative care teams should be readily available to provide consultative or direct care to patients/families who request or require their expertise.
- Medical care contracts should include appropriate reimbursement for palliative care.
- Clinical health outcomes measurement should include palliative care domains.
- Quality of palliative care should be monitored by institutional quality improvement programs.

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.
Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
PALLIATIVE CARE OVERVIEW

SCREENING

Uncontrolled symptoms or Moderate to severe distress related to cancer diagnosis and cancer therapy or Serious comorbid physical and psychosocial conditions or Life expectancy \( \leq 12\) mo or Patient/family concerns about course of disease and decision-making or Patient/family requests palliative care

ASSESSMENT

PALLIATIVE CARE

- Benefits/risks of anticancer therapy
- Symptoms
- Psychosocial distress
- Personal goals/expectations
- Educational and informational needs
- Cultural factors affecting care
- Criteria for early consultation with palliative care specialist

LIFE EXPECTANCY

- Years
- Year to months
- Months to weeks
- Weeks to days (Dying patient)

PALLIATIVE CARE INTERVENTIONS

- Anticancer therapy
- Appropriate treatment of comorbid physical and psychosocial conditions
- Promote coordination of care
- Symptom management
- Advance care planning
- Psychosocial and spiritual support
- Culturally appropriate care
- Resource management/Social support
- Consultation with palliative care specialist
- Hospice referral
- Response to request to withdraw or withhold life sustaining treatment
- Response to request for physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia
- Care of imminently dying patient
- Palliative sedation

REASSESSMENT

Satisfactory

- Patient satisfied with response to anticancer therapy
- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Unsatisfactory

- Intensify palliative care efforts
- Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

AFTER DEATH CARE

Death (A “good death”)

For family and caregivers:
- Immediate after-death care
- Bereavement support
- Cancer risk assessment and modification
For healthcare team:
- General
- Post-death

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SCREENING\textsuperscript{a,b}

- Uncontrolled symptoms or
- Moderate to severe distress related to cancer diagnosis and/or cancer therapy or
- Serious comorbid physical and psychosocial conditions or
- Life expectancy \( \leq 12 \text{ mo} \)
  - Indicators include:
    - Poor performance status
    - ECOG \( \geq 3 \) or KPS \( \leq 50 \)
    - Hypercalcemia
    - Brain or cerebrospinal fluid metastasis
    - Superior vena cava syndrome
    - Spinal cord compression
    - Cachexia
    - Malignant effusions
    - Bilirubin \( \geq 2.5 \)
    - Creatinine \( \geq 3 \)
- Patient/family concerns about course of disease and decision-making or
- Patient/family requests palliative care

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ASSESSMENT

- Benefits/risks of anticancer therapy
- Symptoms
- Psychosocial distress

- Personal goals/expectations
- Educational and informational needs
- Cultural factors affecting care

Criteria for early consultation with palliative care specialist

\textsuperscript{a}Management of any patient with positive screening requires a care plan developed by a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, mental health professionals, and chaplains.

\textsuperscript{b}Oncologists should integrate palliative care into general oncology care for patients who meet screening criteria. Consultation/collaboration with a palliative care specialist/hospice team is recommended for patients with more complex issues.

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
PALLIATIVE CARE ASSESSMENT

Benefits/risks of anticancer therapy

- Natural history of specific tumor
- Potential for response to further treatment
- Meaning of anticancer therapy to patient and family
- Impairment of vital organs
- Performance status
- Serious comorbid conditions

Interventions (See PAL-7)

Symptoms

- Pain
- Dyspnea
- Anorexia/cachexia
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Constipation
- Malignant bowel obstruction
- Fatigue/weakness/asthenia
- Insomnia
- Sedation
- Delirium

Pain interventions (See PAL-8)
Dyspnea (See PAL-9)
Anorexia/cachexia interventions (See PAL-11)
Nausea/Vomiting (See PAL-13)
Constipation (See PAL-15)
Malignant Bowel Obstruction (See PAL-16)
See NCCN Cancer-Related Fatigue Guidelines

Delirium (See PAL-18)

Psychosocial distress

- Psychosocial/psychiatric
- Spiritual
- Psychosocial
  - Social support problems
  - Resources problems

See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines
Resource Management/Social Support (See PAL-20)

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
### Palliative Care Assessment

#### Personal goals/expectations
- Patient goals and expectations
- Family goals and expectations
- Priorities for palliative care
  - Goals and meaning of anticancer therapy
  - Quality of life
- Eligibility for hospice, with needs that might be met by hospice

#### Educational and informational needs
- Patient/family values and preferences about information and communication
- Patient/family perception of disease status

#### Cultural factors affecting care

#### Criteria for early consultation with palliative care specialist

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**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated. Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

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(See PAL-6)
Criteria for early consultation with palliative care expert

- Limited treatment options (especially patients receiving chemotherapy, radiation therapy or surgery with a palliative intent)
- High risk of poor pain control or pain that remains resistant to conventional interventions, eg:
  - Neuropathic pain
  - Incident or breakthrough pain
  - Associated psychosocial and family distress
  - Rapid escalation of opiate dose
  - History of drug or alcohol abuse
  - Impaired cognitive function
  - History of significant psychiatric stress
- History of psychiatric disorder
- Non-pain physical symptoms refractory to conventional management (See PAL-4 for symptoms)
- Multiple “allergies” or a history of multiple adverse reactions to pain and symptom management interventions
- Unexpected ICU admissions (especially those with multiple complications or those requiring lengthy ventilator support)
- High distress score (> 4) (See NCCN Distress Management Guideline)
- Cognitive impairment
- Severe comorbid conditions
- Communication barriers (see note)
- Repeated requests for hastened death

Social circumstances or Anticipatory bereavement issues

- Family/caregiver limitations
- Inadequate social support
- Intensely dependent relationship(s)
- Financial limitations
- Limited access to care
- Family discord
- Patient’s concerns regarding care of dependents
- Spiritual crisis

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

Communication barriers include language, literacy, and physical barriers.
Palliative Care

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BENEFIT/RISK OF ANTICANCER THERAPY

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY

INTERVENTION

REASSESSMENT

Years

• Conventional
• Clinical trials

• Provide appropriate anticancer therapy as outlined in NCCN disease-specific guidelines
• Discuss goals, benefits, and risks of anticancer therapy including possible effects on quality of life
• Clarify intent of anticancer therapy
• Provide evidence-based conventional anticancer therapy
• Offer clinical trials
• Provide appropriate prevention and management of symptoms caused by anticancer therapy
• Provide appropriate palliative care

Satisfactory

• Adequate pain and symptom control
• Reduction of patient/family distress
• Acceptable sense of control
• Relief of caregiver burden
• Strengthened relationships
• Optimized quality of life
• Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Continue anticancer therapy and palliative care

Year to months

• See above interventions
• Offer best supportive care including referral to palliative care or hospice
• Redirect goals and hopes to those that are achievable

Months to weeks

• Discontinue anticancer therapy
• Intensify palliative care in preparation for death
• Focus on symptom control and comfort
• Foster patient participation in preparing loved ones
• Refer to palliative care/hospice team

Unsatisfactory

• Change or discontinue anticancer therapy
• Review patient hopes about and meaning of anticancer therapy
• Intensify palliative care efforts
• Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

Weeks to days (Dying patient)

Ongoing reassessment

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Palliative Care

**PAIN**

- **YEAR TO MONTHS**
  - **MONTHS TO WEEKS**
    - **WEEKS TO DAYS (Dying patient)**

**INTERVENTION**

- **Treat according to NCCN Cancer Pain Guidelines**
  - In addition:
    - Do not reduce dose of opioid solely for decreased blood pressure, respiration rate, or level of consciousness
    - Maintain analgesic therapy; titrate to optimal comfort
    - If opioid reduction is indicated, reduce by ≤ 50% per 24 h to avoid acute opioid withdrawal or pain crisis. Do not administer opioid antagonist
    - Balance analgesia against reduced level of consciousness based on patient preference
    - Modify routes of administration as needed (PO, IV, PR, subcutaneous, sublingual, transdermal) applying equianalgesic dose conversions
    - Consider sedation for refractory pain *(See PAL-29)*

**REASSESSMENT**

- **Satisfactory**
  - Adequate pain and symptom control
  - Reduction of patient/family distress
  - Acceptable sense of control
  - Relief of caregiver burden
  - Strengthened relationships
  - Optimized quality of life
  - Personal growth and enhanced meaning

- **Unsatisfactory**
  - Monitor symptoms and quality of life to determine whether additional end of life measures are required

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
Dyspnea

**Estimation of Life Expectancy**
- Years
- Year to months
- Months to weeks
- Weeks to days (Dying patient)

**Intervention**
- Assess symptom intensity
- Treat underlying causes/comorbid conditions:
  - Radiation/chemotherapy
  - Thoracentesis/pleurodesis
  - Bronchoscopic therapy
  - Bronchodilators, diuretics, antibiotics, transfusions
- Relieve symptoms
  - Temporary ventilator support if clinically indicated for severe reversible condition
  - O₂ therapy
  - Benzodiazepines for anxiety
  - Opioids for cough or dyspnea
  - Nonpharmacologic therapies including fan, cooler temperatures, stress management, relaxation therapy
  - Educational, psychosocial, and emotional support

**Reassessment**
- Satisfactory
  - Adequate pain and symptom control
  - Reduction of patient/family distress
  - Acceptable sense of control
  - Relief of caregiver burden
  - Strengthened relationships
  - Optimized quality of life
  - Personal growth and enhanced meaning
  - Continue to treat and monitor symptoms and quality of life to determine whether status warrants change in strategies
- Unsatisfactory
  - Intensify palliative care efforts
  - Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

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See Intervention (PAL-10)

See List of Symptoms in Palliative Care Table of Contents

Ongoing reassessment
Dyspnea

Estimation of Life Expectancy

- Years
- Year to months
- Months to weeks
- Weeks to days (Dying patient)

Assess symptom intensity
- Use tachypnea/distress markers of potential dyspnea in noncommunicative patients
- Focus on comfort
- Relieve symptoms
  - Opioids for cough or dyspnea
  - Benzodiazepines for anxiety/agitation/air hunger
  - Nonpharmacologic therapies; educational, psychosocial, and emotional support (See PAL-9)
- Reduce excessive secretions (scopolamine, hyoscyamine, atropine)
- \( \frac{O_2}{O_2} \) if subjective report of relief
- Withhold/withdraw/time-limited trial of mechanical ventilation as indicated
  - Address patient and family preferences, prognosis, reversibility
  - Sedation as needed
- Discontinue fluid support/consider low-dose diuretics if fluid overload may be contributing factor
- Anticipatory guidance for patient/family on dying process, treatment of respiratory crisis
- Provide emotional support

Intervention (PAL-9)

Satisfactory
- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Reassessment

Unsatisfactory
- Intensify palliative care interventions and consider consultation with palliative care specialist
- Consider sedation for intractable symptoms (See PAL-29)

Continued reassessment

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
**ANOREXIA/ CACHEXIA**

- **ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY**
  - Years
  - Year to months
  - Months to weeks
  - Weeks to days (Dying patient)

- **INTERVENTION**
  - Evaluate rate/severity of weight loss
  - Treat readily reversible cause of anorexia:
    - Early satiety
    - Metoclopramide
    - Symptoms that interfere with intake
    - Depression
    - Constipation
    - Pain
    - Mucositis
    - Nausea/vomiting
  - Review/modify medications that interfere with intake
  - Evaluate for endocrine abnormalities:
    - Hypogonadism
    - Thyroid dysfunction
    - Metabolic abnormalities (eg, increased calcium)
  - Consider appetite stimulant (eg, megestrol acetate)
  - Exercise program
  - Assess economic factors
  - Consider nutrition consult
  - Consider nutrition support clinical trials

- **REASSESSMENT**
  - Satisfactory
    - Weight stabilization or gain
    - Improvement in symptoms that interfere with intake
    - Improved energy
    - Resolution of metabolic or endocrine abnormalities
  - Unsatisfactory
    - Intensify palliative care interventions
    - Dietary consultation
    - Consider clinical trial

- **Ongoing reassessment**

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### Anorexia/Cachexia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY</th>
<th>INTERVENTION</th>
<th>REASSESSMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td><strong>See Interventions (PAL-11)</strong></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Assess importance of symptoms of anorexia and cachexia to patient and family</td>
<td>- Intensify palliative care efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Treat for depression</td>
<td>- Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Recognize that suspension of nutritional support is a value-laden issue. Consider consultation with bioethicist or pastoral counselor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Inform patient and family of natural history of disease, including the following points:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Absence of hunger and thirst is normal in the dying patient</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Nutritional support may not be metabolized in patients with advanced cancer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- There are risks associated with nutritional support and hydration, including fluid overload, infection, and hastened death</td>
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<td>- IV hydration may increase excretion of drug metabolites providing benefit to the patient</td>
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<td>- Symptoms like dry mouth can be treated with local measures, eg, mouthcare, small amounts of liquids</td>
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<td>- Withdrawal of IV or nasogastric (NG) tube feeding is ethically permissible in this setting. It will not cause exacerbation of symptoms and may improve some symptoms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Focus on patient goals and preferences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Provide family with alternate ways of caring for the patient</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Provide emotional support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Months to weeks</td>
<td><strong>See Special Palliative Care Interventions; Imminently Dying Patient (PAL-28)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks to days (Dying patient)</td>
<td><strong>Ongoing reassessment</strong></td>
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### Notes
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**Guidelines Index**

Palliative Care TOC

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Version 1.2006 06/22/06, © 2006 National Comprehensive Cancer Network, Inc. All rights reserved. These guidelines and this illustration may not be reproduced in any form without the express written permission of NCCN.
In patients with advanced cancer, nausea and vomiting may be secondary to the cachexia syndrome (chronic nausea, anorexia, asthenia, changing body image and autonomic failure).

Around-the-clock dosing schedule would likely provide the greatest benefit to the patient.

Continuous intravenous or subcutaneous infusions of different antiemetics may be necessary for the management of intractable NV.

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
**Nausea and Vomiting**

Add a 5-HT3 antagonist (e.g., ondansetron) ± an anticholinergic agent (e.g., scopolamine) ± antihistamine (e.g., meclizine).

If NV persists:

Add corticosteroid (e.g., dexamethasone).

If NV persists:

Consider using a continuous IV/SC infusion of antiemetics; consider an opioid rotation if patient on opioids.

If NV persists:

Consider adding a cannabinoid, alternative therapies (e.g., acupuncture), or palliative sedation *(See PAL-29)*

**Intervention**

**Reassessment**

**Satisfactory**

- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Continue to treat and monitor symptoms and quality of life to determine whether status warrants change in strategies

**Unsatisfactory**

- Intensify palliative care efforts
- Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

Ongoing Reassessment *(See PAL-13)*

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Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
### Constipation

**Life Expectancy:**
- Years
- Year to months
- Months to weeks
- Weeks to days (Dying patient)

**Constipation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preventive Measures</th>
<th>INTERVENTION</th>
<th>REASSESSMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prophylactic medications</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stimulant laxative + stool softener (senna + docusate, 2 tablets every night)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase dose of laxative and stool softener (senna + docusate, 2-3 tablets bid-tid with goal of 1 non-forced bowel movement every 1-2 days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase fluids</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase dietary fiber if patient has adequate fluid intake and physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise, if appropriate</td>
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**INTERVENTION**
- If constipation present
  - Assess for cause and severity of constipation
  - Rule out impaction, especially if diarrhea accompanies constipation (overflow around impaction)
  - Rule out obstruction (physical exam, abdominal x-ray)
  - Treat other causes (hypercalcemia, hypokalemia, hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus, medications)
  - Add and titrate bisacodyl 10-15 mg hs-tid with goal of 1 non-forced bowel movement every 1-2 days
  - If impacted:
    - Administer glycerine suppository ± mineral oil retention enema
    - Perform manual disimpaction following pre-medication with analgesic ± anxiolytic
- If constipation persists
  - Reassess for cause and severity of constipation
  - Recheck for impaction or obstruction
  - Consider adding other laxatives, such as bisacodyl (one suppository rectally daily-bid); polyethylene glycol (1 capful/8 oz water bid); lactulose, 30-60 mL bid-qid; sorbitol, 30 mL every 2 h x 3, then prn; magnesium hydroxide, 30-60 mL daily-bid; or magnesium citrate, 8 oz daily
  - Phosphasoda or tap water enema until clear
  - Consider use of a prokinetic agent (eg, metoclopramide, 10-20 mg PO qid)

**REASSESSMENT**
- Satisfactory
  - Adequate pain and symptom control
  - Reduction of patient/family distress
  - Acceptable sense of control
  - Relief of caregiver burden
  - Strengthened relationships
  - Optimized quality of life
  - Personal growth and enhanced meaning
- Unsatisfactory
  - Intensify palliative care efforts
  - Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

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### Palliative Care - Malignant Bowel Obstruction

**Estimated Life Expectancy**
- **Years**
- **Year to months**
- **Months to weeks**
- **Weeks to days (Dying patient)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malignant bowel obstruction</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screen for and treat underlying benign reversible causes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adhesions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Radiation-induced strictures</td>
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<td>Internal hernias</td>
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<td>Assess for malignant causes</td>
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<td>Tumor mass</td>
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<td>Carcinomatosis</td>
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<td>Assessment of the goals of treatment for the patient can help guide the intervention(^h) (e.g., decrease NV, allow patient to eat, decrease pain, allow patient to go home/hospice)</td>
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- **Consider medical management rather than surgical management**
- **Assessment of goals of treatment for the patient can help guide the intervention\(^h\)** (e.g., decrease NV, allow patient to eat, decrease pain, allow patient to go home/hospice)

- **Pharmacologic management** (See PAL-17)
- **Intravenous or Subcutaneous fluids** (See PAL-17)
- **Endoscopic management** (See PAL-17)
- **Nasogastric (NG) tube drainage** (See PAL-17)
  - Consider only if other measures fail to reduce vomiting

**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated. Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

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\(^g\) Plain film radiography evaluation is usually enough to establish the diagnosis of bowel obstruction. Consider CT scan if surgical intervention is contemplated as it is more sensitive and helps identify the cause of obstruction.

\(^h\) Most malignant bowel obstructions are partial, allowing time to discuss with patient and family appropriate interventions.

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**See Interventions PAL-17**

**See Reassessment PAL-17**
**MALIGNANT BOWEL OBSTRUCTION**

**INTERVENTION**

- **Operative management**
  - Risks must be discussed with patient/family (mortality, morbidity, re-obstruction)
  - Improved quality of life should be the primary goal of surgical treatment
- **Endoscopic management**
  - Percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tube for drainage
  - Endoscopic stent placement
- **Pharmacologic management**
  - Use rectal, transdermal, subcutaneous or intravenous routes of administration
  - Consider as an adjunct to invasive procedure when invasive procedures not an option
  - Opioids
  - Antiemetics-do not use antiemetics that increase gastrointestinal mobility such as metoclopramide, but these may be beneficial in incomplete bowel obstruction
  - Octreotide-consider early in the diagnosis due to high efficacy and tolerability (start 150 mg SC BID up to 300 BID or via continuous subcutaneous infusion)
  - Anticholinergics
  - Corticosteroids (discontinue if no improvement noted in 3-5 days; up to 60 mg/day of dexamethasone)
- **Intravenous or subcutaneous fluids**
  - Consider if evidence of dehydration
- **Nasogastric (NG) tube drainage**
  - Usually uncomfortable
  - Increased risk of aspiration
  - Consider on a limited trial basis only if other measures fail to reduce vomiting
- **Total parenteral nutrition (TPN)**
  - Consider only if expected improvement of quality of life with life expectancy of may months to years

**REASSESSMENT**

- Satisfactory
  - Adequate pain and symptom control
  - Reduction of patient/family distress
  - Acceptable sense of control
  - Relief of caregiver burden
  - Strengthened relationships
  - Optimized quality of life
  - Personal growth and enhanced meaning
- Unsatisfactory
  - Intensify palliative care efforts
  - Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

**Ongoing Reassessment (See PAL-16)**

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1 Poor prognosis criteria for surgery include: ascites, carcinomatosis, palpable intraabdominal masses, multiple bowel obstructions, previous abdominal radiation, very advanced disease, and poor overall clinical status.

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**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

**Clinical Trials:** NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
Screen using DSM-IV criteria for delirium
Screen for and treat underlying reversible causes
Metabolic causes
Bowel obstruction/obstipation
Infection
CNS events
Bladder outlet obstruction
Medication or substance effect or withdrawal (e.g., benzodiazepines, opioids)

Delirium
Years
Year to months
Months to weeks
Weeks to days (Dying patient)
See Intervention (PAL-19)

Severe delirium
Mild

Haloperidol 0.5-1 mg q 1 h prn until episode under control, then reduce to that dose q 6-8 h
Alternative agents: risperidone (0.5-1 mg BID), olanzapine (2.5-15 mg daily), or quetiapine fumarate (50-100 mg PO/SL BID)
Add 0.5-2 mg q 4-6 h lorazepam for patients with refractory agitation despite high doses of neuroleptics
Support caregiver

Evaluate primary therapy
Haloperidol 0.5-1 mg BID
Orient patient with family presence
Alternative agents: risperidone (0.5-1 mg BID), olanzapine (2.5-15 mg daily), or quetiapine fumarate (50-100 mg PO or SL BID)

Satisfactory
Adequate pain and symptom control
Reduction of patient/family distress
Acceptable sense of control
Relief of caregiver burden
Strengthened relationships
Optimized quality of life
Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Continue to treat and monitor symptoms and quality of life to determine whether status warrants change in strategies

Unsatisfactory
Intensify palliative care interventions and consider consultation with palliative care specialist or psychiatrist

Ongoing reassessment

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.
Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
**Palliative Care**

**DELIRIUM**

**ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY**

- Years
- Year to months
- Months to weeks
- Weeks to days (Dying patient)

**INTERVENTION**

- Evaluate for iatrogenic causes
- Disease progression
  - Agitation may be mistaken for pain resulting in higher doses of opioids which may exacerbate delirium
  - Rotate opioids
  - Focus on symptom control
  - Focus on family support and coping mechanism
  - Appropriate upward dose titration of haloperidol, risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine fumarate, and lorazepam
  - Decrease doses in presence of hepatic renal failure
  - Consider rectal or intravenous haloperidol or administration of chlorpromazine ± lorazepam
  - Remove unnecessary medications, tubes, etc.

**REASSESSMENT**

- Satisfactory
  - Adequate pain and symptom control
  - Reduction of patient/family distress
  - Acceptable sense of control
  - Relief of caregiver burden
  - Strengthened relationships
  - Optimized quality of life
  - Personal growth and enhanced meaning
  - Continue to treat and monitor symptoms and quality of life to determine whether status warrants change in strategies

- Unsatisfactory
  - Intensify palliative care interventions
  - Consult with a palliative care specialist or psychiatrist

**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated. Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
Palliative Care

**Resource Management/Social Support**

- Ensure caregiver(s) are available
- Ensure safe home environment
- Ensure adequate access to transportation
- Ensure sufficient financial resources
- Refer to social services as needed to assist with mobilization of family, community, financial resources
- Ensure support and education to caregiver(s) and family members
- Respond to caregiver-specific burdens and stresses
- Assess bereavement risk
- Discuss personal, spiritual, and cultural issues relating to prognosis
- Obtain medical interpreters/translators unrelated to patient and family as needed

**Reassessment**

- Satisfactory
  - Adequate pain and symptom control
  - Reduction of patient/family distress
  - Acceptable sense of control
  - Relief of caregiver burden
  - Strengthened relationships
  - Optimized quality of life
  - Personal growth and enhanced meaning
- Unsatisfactory
  - Intensify efforts to communicate palliative care options
  - Consider referral to psychiatrist to evaluate and treat depression
  - See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines

**Ongoing reassessment**

- Intensify efforts to communicate palliative care options
- Consider referral to psychiatrist to evaluate and treat depression
- See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines
Discuss prognosis on an ongoing basis in clear, consistent language with patient, caregiver(s), and family, including information about the natural history of the specific tumor

Evaluate and support patient’s desires for comfort

Explain the dying process and expected events to patient, caregiver(s), and family members

Respond to caregiver-specific demands and stresses

Reassess bereavement risk

Ensure that care conforms with cultural and spiritual/religious practices

Provide emotional support and address any patient-family or intra-family conflicts regarding intervention

Obtain medical interpreter/translators unrelated to patient and family as needed

Ongoing reassessment

Satisfactory

• Adequate pain and symptom control
• Reduction of patient/family distress
• Acceptable sense of control
• Relief of caregiver burden
• Strengthened relationships
• Optimized quality of life
• Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Ongoing reevaluation and communication between the patient and the health care team

Unsatisfactory

• Intensify efforts to communicate palliative care options
• Consider referral to psychiatrist to evaluate and treat depression
• See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
Palliative Care

**GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS**

AND EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL NEEDS

CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING CARE

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**INTERVENTION**

- Assess patient/family understanding of expected course of disease
- Clarify with patient how much information the patient wishes to have and how much information should be given to the family
  - Desire for information may change and may need to be challenged as death approaches
  - Provide information about expected course of disease and anticipated care needs
  - Provide anticipatory guidance on dying process
- Facilitate decisions on providing information to family
- Determine the decision-making preferences/styles of the patient and family
  - Facilitate congruence of patient goals and expectations with those of family
  - The involvement of the family may change over time
- Determine the patient/family values and preferences with respect to quality of life
- Facilitate advance care planning (**PAL-24**)
- Encourage the patient to review and revise personal priorities, identify “unfinished business”, heal interpersonal relationships, and put affairs in order (providers demonstrate cultural sensitivity)
- Determine eligibility and readiness for specialized palliative/hospice care and needs that might be best met by hospice
- Foster realistic expectations
- Provide clear, consistent discussion with patient and family about prognosis on an ongoing basis
- Respect goals and needs of patient and family regarding the dying process
- Address cultural customs and beliefs directly or through a cultural liaison
- Anticipate patient and family needs
- Provide anticipatory grief support and end of life education

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**REASSESSMENT**

Satisfactory

- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Unsatisfactory

- Reassess patient and family
- Intensify palliative care efforts
- Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

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**GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS**

AND EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL NEEDS

CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING CARE

---

**INTERVENTION**

- See Interventions PAL-23

---

**REASSESSMENT**

Satisfactory

- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Unsatisfactory

- Reassess patient and family
- Intensify palliative care efforts
- Consult or refer to specialized palliative care services or hospice

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**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS
AND EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL NEEDS
CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING CARE

- Patient
- Family

- Years
- Year to months
- Months to weeks
- Weeks to days (Dying patient)

INTERVENTION

- Assess patient/family understanding of the dying process
- Educate patient and family on dying process
- Prepare for patient’s death
- Facilitate anticipatory grief work
- Educate patient and family on dying process
- Ensure continuing care process and refer to appropriate care
- Promote that patient does not die alone
- Offer spiritual support for ritual considerations

REASSESSMENT

Satisfactory
- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Reassess patient and family
Intensify palliative care efforts
Consult or refer to hospice or specialized palliative care services

Unsatisfactory

Ongoing reassessment
(See PAL-22)

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.
Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
Advance care planning

Estimated life expectancy

Intervention

Reassessment

### Ongoing reassessment

**Satisfactory**
- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

**Unsatisfactory**
- Intensify efforts to communicate palliative care options
- Consider referral to psychiatrist to evaluate and treat depression
- See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines

### See Intervention (PAL-25)

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
**Palliative Care**

**Advance Care Planning**

- **Estimated Life Expectancy**
  - Years
  - Year to months
  - Months to weeks
  - Weeks to days (Dying patient)

- **Intervention**
  - See Intervention (PAL-24)
  - Determine patient and family preferences for the location of patient's death
  - Confirm and ensure complete documentation of advance care directives including DNR order if patient desires
  - Ensure advance care directives are available to all caregivers regardless of treatment setting
  - Seek resolution of conflict between patient and family goals and wishes
  - Explore fears about dying and provide emotional support
  - Ensure advance care directives are available to all caregivers regardless of treatment setting
  - Implement and ensure compliance with advance care directive
  - DNR

- **Reassessment**
  - Satisfactory
    - Adequate pain and symptom control
    - Reduction of patient/family distress
    - Acceptable sense of control
    - Relief of caregiver burden
    - Strengthened relationships
    - Optimized quality of life
    - Personal growth and enhanced meaning
  - Unsatisfactory
    - Intensify efforts to communicate palliative care options
    - Consult with a psychiatrist to evaluate and treat depression/anxiety

**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

**Clinical Trials:** NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

**See Special Palliative Care Interventions:**
- Imminently Dying Patient (PAL-28)

**Palliative Care Table of Contents**
CRITERIA FOR EARLY CONSULTATION WITH PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALIST

**INERVENTION**

- Early consultation with palliative care specialist/team
- Collaborate with other physicians treating the patient
- Refer to appropriate health care professionals
  - Mental health
  - Social services
  - Health care interpreters
  - Others
- Rally community support
  - Religious
  - School
  - Community agencies
- Expedite referral to hospice team when appropriate

**REASSESSMENT**

Satisfactory

- Adequate pain and symptom control
- Reduction of patient/family distress
- Acceptable sense of control
- Relief of caregiver burden
- Strengthened relationships
- Optimized quality of life
- Personal growth and enhanced meaning

Ongoing reevaluation and communication between the patient and the health care team

Unsatisfactory

- Intensify efforts to communicate palliative care options
- Consult with a psychiatrist to evaluate and treat pre-existing psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and dysfunctional adjustment reactions

- See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines

Ongoing reassessment

**Note:** All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
SPECIAL PALLIATIVE CARE INTERVENTIONS

Response to Requests for Hastened Death (physician-assisted suicide, active euthanasia)

The NCCN Palliative Care Task Force believes that the most appropriate response to a request for assistance in suicide is to intensify palliative care. However, evaluating a patient's request for physician-assisted suicide is an important skill, even for clinicians who feel this practice is never morally acceptable. A request for hastened death often has important meanings that require exploration. Clarifying these meanings can sometimes enlarge the range of useful therapeutic options aside from providing a lethal prescription.

- Address the request explicitly. If a patient uses a euphemism for death or refers to it indirectly, ask for clarification. Do not assume that a wish for death to come soon is a wish for a lethal prescription.
- Explore the reasons for the request, and find out “why now?”
- Distinguish wishing not to live in their current state from wishing to be killed.
- Reassess symptom control.
- Reassess psychological/psychiatric issues, especially depression, anxiety, grief, psychosis, and delirium.
- Ask about the patient's relationship to family or other important people.
- Ask about individual values and personal views of suffering.
- Offer to explain the dying process.
- Include information about natural history of the disease and dying.
- Address the role of medical caregivers, including hospice if appropriate.
- Discuss alternatives to physician-assisted suicide, treatment withdrawal if appropriate, not eating or drinking if appropriate, and/or sedation for refractory symptoms.
- Request psychiatry consult to diagnose and treat reversible causes of psychological suffering.

Know the local legal status of hastened death. Some patients may be confused about legal/ethical distinctions; treatment withdrawal and aggressive treatments for symptoms, such as pain, are not physician-assisted suicide. Hastened death is only legal in Oregon and has specific guidelines. Euthanasia is not legal in any state in the USA.

Examine your own response as a clinician to this particular patient’s request. Requests for hastened death can force clinicians to confront their own personal, professional, moral, and legal responsibilities. Dealing with an individual patient can be quite different from thinking about the issue in abstract circumstances. Consider consultation with an Ethics Committee, Palliative Care Service, or experienced colleague. These cases are usually complex and often benefit from consideration of multiple perspectives.

Clarify the care plan. Requests for hastened death should prompt ongoing discussion and active attempts to ameliorate physical, psychological, and spiritual distress. Reemphasize your own commitment to providing continuing care for the patient.

Maintain medications for symptom control.

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

See Special Palliative Care Interventions: Imminently Dying Patient (PAL-28)
SPECIAL PALLIATIVE CARE INTERVENTIONS

Imminently dying patient

- Ensure ongoing staff assessment.
- Try to ensure privacy; private room if possible.
- Discontinue diagnostic tests.
- Reposition for comfort as appropriate.
- Avoid unnecessary needle sticks.
- Provide mouth care, (eg, hydrogen peroxide/water solution, KY jelly.)
- Treat for urinary retention and fecal impaction.
- Ensure access to medication even when oral route is not available.
- Allow patient and family uninterrupted time together.
- Ensure the family understands and is supported through the dying process.
- Encourage visits by children if consistent with family values.
- Facilitate around-the-clock family presence.
- Ensure that caregivers understand and will honor advance directives.
- Provide respectful space for families.
- Facilitate closure.

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.

Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.

See After Death Care (PAL-30)
PALLIATIVE SEDATION

- Confirm that the patient has refractory symptoms and is imminently dying
  - Refractory symptoms: symptoms that cannot be adequately controlled despite aggressive, skilled, palliative care that does not compromise consciousness
  - Imminently dying: prognosis of hours to days confirmed by two physicians
- Obtain informed consent for sedation from patient and/or surrogate
  - Discuss the patient’s disease status, treatment goals, prognosis, and expected outcomes with the patient and/or surrogate
  - Clarify that sedation will consist of the continuous administration of medications that will render the patient unconscious
  - Review the ethical justification of the use of sedation utilizing the Principle of Double Effect with the patient/surrogate/family and members of the health care team
  - Explain that consent for sedation must be accompanied by consent for:
    - Discontinuation of life-prolonging therapies
    - Withholding of cardiopulmonary resuscitation
- Permit reassignment of healthcare professionals who cannot provide sedation due to personal or professional values and beliefs as long as patient care can be safely transferred to the care of another healthcare professional.
- Select appropriate sedative treatment plan based upon the patient’s response to recent and current medications. Typical sedatives used for palliative sedation parenteral infusions include:
  - Thiopental: Initial infusion rate 20-80 mg/h; range 160-440 mg/h
  - Midazolam: Initial infusion rate 0.4-0.8 mg/h; range 20-102 mg/h
- Monitor patient regularly and titrate sedatives to establish and maintain a level of sedation that relieves the patient’s refractory symptoms
- Provide ongoing psychosocial and spiritual support for the patient’s surrogate, family, and health care professionals.

Note: All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise indicated.
Clinical Trials: NCCN believes that the best management of any cancer patient is in a clinical trial. Participation in clinical trials is especially encouraged.
DEATH ASSESSMENT

A “good death”:
- Free from avoidable distress and suffering for patients, families, and caregivers
- In general accord with patient’s and family’s wishes
- Reasonably consistent with clinical, cultural, and ethical standards

For family and caregivers:
- Immediate after death care
  - Remove implanted devices
  - Ensure culturally sensitive, respectful treatment of the body
  - Provide family time with the body
  - Address survivor concerns about organ donation and/or autopsy
  - Facilitate funeral arrangements
  - File death certificate; complete necessary forms
  - Inform other health care providers of patient’s death
- Bereavement support
  - Formally express condolences on patient’s death
  - Refer to appropriate bereavement services within the institution or in the community
  - Attend debriefing meeting with family if family desires one
- Discuss cancer risk assessment and modification with family members

For health care professionals
General:
- Legitimize discussion of personal issues that impact on patient care
- Create climate of safety for discussion of patient deaths
- Provide regular opportunities for reflection and remembering for staff through memorial ritual
Post-death:
- Review medical issues related to patient death
  - Explore concerns and questions regarding quality of patient care
- Review family emotional responses to patient death
- Review staff emotional responses to patient death
  - Include nurses, nursing assistants, physician team members (including medical students, residents, fellows), social work, chaplaincy as appropriate
  - Consider bereavement ritual for staff (eg, brief reading, moment of quiet, etc.)
Summary of the Guidelines updates

Highlights of major changes in the 1.2006 version of the Palliative Care guidelines from the 1.2005 version include:

- A definition of palliative care was added, along with standards of palliative care was added (PAL-1).
- The palliative care overview was extensively reworded and updated (PAL-2).
- Screening for palliative was re-organized (PAL-3).
- Nausea/vomiting, constipation and malignant bowel obstruction were added as symptoms in palliative care assessment (PAL-4).
- Psychosocial distress was reorganized under palliative care assessment (PAL-4).
- Additional palliative care assessments such as personal goals and expectations, educational and informational needs and cultural factors affecting care were added (PAL-5).
- Assessment for criteria for early consultation with a palliative care expert was entirely updated (PAL-6).
- Interventions for conventional therapy and clinical trials were reorganized and updated (PAL-7).
- Reassessment criteria for a satisfactory response was updated for individual symptoms throughout the guideline.
- Response to unsatisfactory reassessment was updated for individual symptoms throughout the guideline.
- Years was added as a life expectancy category throughout the algorithm.
- Interventions for dyspnea were updated and reworded to include the treatment of underlying causes/comorbid conditions, educational, psychosocial and emotional support, nonpharmacologic therapies and sedation (PAL-9 and PAL-10).
- Interventions for anorexia/cachexia were updated and reworded to include a review/modification of medications, evaluation for endocrine abnormalities, consideration of appetite stimulant, exercise program, nutrition consult, nutrition support clinical trials, assessment of economic factors and an expansion of the treatment of reversible causes (PAL-11 and PAL-12).
- Algorithms for management of nausea and vomiting were added (PAL-13 and PAL-14).
- A pathway for constipation was added (PAL-15).
- Pathways for malignant bowel obstruction were added (PAL-16 and PAL-17).
- Interventions for delirium were updated and reworded to include additional routes and dosing of medications, and the removal of unnecessary medications and tubes (PAL-18 and PAL-19).
- Interventions for psychosocial support were updated and reworded. Ongoing discussion of prognosis, assessment of bereavement risk and support for conflicts regarding interventions were added (PAL-20 and PAL-21).
- Interventions for goals and expectations were updated and reworded. Assessment of the understanding of the course of the disease, facilitation of advance care planning, and addressing cultural customs were added (PAL-22 and PAL-23).
- Interventions for advance care planning were updated and reworded and include the exploration of fears about dying and address anxiety (PAL-24 and PAL-25).
- A request for a psychiatry consult is a special intervention listed to diagnose and treat reversible causes of psychological suffering (PAL-27).
- Palliative sedation was extensively expanded and updated (PAL-29).
- The definition of a “good death” was reworded. After death care for health care professionals was added (PAL-30).
Palliative Care

Overview

The aim of the NCCN Palliative Care Guidelines is to help assure that each cancer patient experiences the best quality of life that is possible throughout the illness trajectory. The Palliative Care Guidelines Panel is an interdisciplinary panel of representatives from NCCN member institutions, comprising of medical and surgical oncologists, neurologists, anesthesiologists, psychiatrists, internists, palliative care specialists, pastoral care counselors, social workers, and nurses. The NCCN Palliative Care Guidelines were developed from the collaborative efforts of these experts based on their clinical experience and available scientific evidence.

NCCN Categories of Consensus

**Category 1**: There is uniform NCCN consensus, based on high-level evidence, that the recommendation is appropriate.

**Category 2A**: There is uniform NCCN consensus, based on lower-level evidence including clinical experience, that the recommendation is appropriate.

**Category 2B**: There is nonuniform NCCN consensus (but no major disagreement), based on lower-level evidence including clinical experience, that the recommendation is appropriate.

**Category 3**: There is major NCCN disagreement that the recommendation is appropriate.

All recommendations are category 2A unless otherwise noted.

Palliative Oncology

During the past 20 years, increasing attention has been paid to quality-of-life issues in oncology.\(^1\)\(^4\) Statistics reveal that 50% of patients diagnosed with cancer will die of their disease.\(^5\) More than 85% of patients with advanced disease requiring systemic chemotherapy will die of their disease. As the hospice movement has grown in this country, palliative care has developed into an integral part of (rather than the antithesis of) comprehensive cancer care.\(^6\)\(^-\)\(^10\) Although 50% of the cancer patients who die each year in this country receive hospice care, most patients are referred too late for comprehensive palliative care to exert its full benefit. Too many patients are never referred at all. Administration of chemotherapy late in the course of cancer care, including in the last days of life, is growing more common.\(^11\) In addition, oncologists have reported that they have difficulty obtaining the services they need for their dying patients.\(^12\) Palliative care needs to be integrated earlier into the continuum of cancer care.\(^13\)\(^-\)\(^17\) Building on the World Health Organization's recommended model of resource allocation in cancer care,\(^9\) palliative, symptom-modifying therapy should be provided simultaneously with disease-modifying therapy from diagnosis.\(^18\) As the cancer progresses and anticancer therapy becomes less effective, appropriate, or desired, palliative care becomes the major focus of the continuing care of the patient and family.\(^19\) Palliative care should begin with the presentation of symptoms, even before the source of those symptoms has been fully determined. Patients with increased risk for cancer should also be provided with supportive care along with risk-reduction therapies. Palliative care continues after the patient’s death in the form of bereavement support for the patient’s survivors.
Educational programs should be provided to all healthcare professionals and trainees so that they can develop effective palliative care knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The number of palliative care programs in the United States is rapidly increasing. The establishment of palliative medicine as a medical subspecialty is receiving an unprecedented level of support from at least seven cosponsoring American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) (www.abms.org) boards including Anesthesiology, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Psychiatry and Neurology, Surgery, and Pediatrics. The Center to Advance Palliative Care (www.capc.org) has been established to increase the availability of quality palliative care services in hospitals and other health care settings for people with advanced illness. Support for expansion of palliative medicine education has been offered by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) (www.lcme.org), which has mandated palliative medicine education for medical schools. In addition, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) (www.acgme.org) now requires training in palliative medicine for oncology fellows, including training in pain, psychosocial care, personal awareness, and hospice care.

Palliative care should be delivered based upon clinical practice guidelines. Patients and families should be informed that palliative care is an integral part of their comprehensive cancer care.\(^{20,21}\) Initially, the primary oncology team (multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, mental health professionals, and chaplains) can provide most of the palliative care needed by the patient. Intractable symptoms or complex psychosocial problems can benefit from the inclusion of palliative care experts. As the disease progresses and the prognosis becomes a matter of months, collaboration with palliative/hospice teams is usually advised to best meet the many needs of the patient and family. Effective palliative care also requires an interdisciplinary team approach. Skilled, palliative care specialists and interdisciplinary, palliative care teams should be readily available to provide consultative or direct care to patients/families that request or require their expertise. Clear, consistent, and empathetic communication with patient and family about the natural history of the cancer and its prognosis is at the core of effective palliative care.\(^{22,23}\)

In December 2004, National Institutes of Health (NIH) held a state-of-the-science conference on Improving End-of-Life Care, indicating that palliative medicine is a recognized research area. The final statement from this NIH conference is a useful resource for understanding the complex issues surrounding end-of-life care (http://consensus.nih.gov/2004/2004EndOfLifeCareSOS024html.htm). Some of the conclusions are listed below:

1. End-of-life care is often fragmented among providers and provider settings, leading to a lack of continuity of care and impeding the ability to provide high-quality, interdisciplinary care.

2. Enhanced communication among patients, families, and providers is crucial to high-quality end-of-life care.

3. The design of the current Medicare hospice benefit limits the availability of the full range of interventions needed by many persons at the end of life” (eg, radiation therapy for symptom management).

Lorenz KA et al. performed a systematic review of end-of-life care and outcomes as the background for National Institute of Health State of the Science Conference on End-of-Life care.\(^{24}\) Additional documents on palliative care in cancer patients were published by
the National Consensus Project and National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) in 2004. Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care by the National Consensus Project were published in 2004 and the National Quality Forum has developed a national quality framework for evaluating palliative care programs, extending beyond terminally ill cancer patients to include a broad spectrum of patients with multiple illnesses. These guidelines provide an in-depth assessment of many issues surrounding palliative care (eg, cultural, ethical, legal, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of care). NICE issued guidance on how supportive and palliative care services should be provided for adults with cancer (http://www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=csqsp). Some of the key recommendations are listed below:

1. Patients and their caregivers should have access to a range of specialist services that help them cope with cancer and its treatment.

2. Whenever possible, significant information should be given to patients by a senior health professional that has received advanced level training and is assessed as being an effective communicator.

3. Good quality information should be available free of charge to help people affected by cancer make decisions about their care.

Other resources that may be useful for patients, their caregivers, and/or clinicians are listed in Table 1.

**Palliative Care Guidelines**

The NCCN Palliative Care Guidelines were developed to facilitate the appropriate integration of palliative care into oncology practice. The guidelines outline procedures for screening, assessment, palliative care interventions, reassessment, and after-death care. The panel chose to focus on the needs of patients in their last 12 months of life. The panel chose this period to distill the content of textbooks and curricula into guidelines that could facilitate clinical decision-making in the same way that NCCN disease-oriented and symptom-oriented guidelines have done, although patients and families can certainly benefit from palliative care integrated throughout the illness trajectory.

The guidelines define palliative care as both a philosophy of care and an organized, highly structured system for delivering care to persons with life-threatening or debilitating illness. Palliative care is patient and family-centered care that focuses upon effective management of pain and other distressing symptoms while incorporating psychosocial and spiritual care according to patient/family needs, values, beliefs, and cultures. The goal of palliative care is to prevent and relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for patients and their families, regardless of the stage of the disease or the need for other therapies. Palliative care can be delivered concurrently with life-prolonging care (integrated model) or as the main focus of care.

**Palliative Care Screening**

All cancer patients should be screened for palliative care needs at their initial visit, at appropriate intervals, and as clinically indicated. Use of the NCCN Palliative Care Guidelines should be considered for patients in the following clinical situations: uncontrolled symptoms, moderate to severe distress related to cancer diagnosis and therapy, serious comorbid physical and psychosocial conditions, advanced or progressive disease for which there is no effective curative therapy, and/or life expectancy of one year or less, patient or family's concerns about the course of disease and decision making, and/or a
specific request by the patient or family for palliative care. An estimate of life expectancy in terms of a year to months, months to weeks, or weeks to days should be made to guide the use of specific palliative care interventions. Potential indicators that patients are in their last year of life include decreased performance status (Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group [ECOG] 3 or more; Karnofsky performance score [KPS] 50 or less), hypercalcemia, central nervous system metastases, superior vena cava syndrome, spinal cord compression, cachexia, malignant effusions, liver failure, kidney failure, or other serious comorbid conditions. Some patients, for example those with stage IV lung cancer, pancreatic cancer, and glioblastoma multiforme would benefit from palliative care beginning at the time of diagnosis, as prognosis in these conditions is usually less than a year. A final screening criterion is patient or family’s concern about course of disease and decision making and specific request by the patient or family for palliative care. Clinicians should integrate palliative care into general oncology care for patients who meet these screening criteria. These patients should undergo a comprehensive palliative care assessment by their primary oncology team. Comorbid physical and psychosocial conditions should be treated by appropriate clinicians. Consultation or collaboration with palliative care specialists is recommended for patients with more complex problems.

Patients who do not meet these screening criteria should be re-screened at regular intervals. Reassessment should be ongoing, with continuation or modification of life expectancy--guided palliative care until the patient's death.

**Palliative Care Assessment**

A comprehensive palliative care assessment evaluates the benefits and risks of anticancer therapy; physical, symptoms; psychosocial distress; personal goals and expectations; educational and informational needs; cultural factors affecting care; and criteria for early consultation with palliative care specialist. Assessment of the benefits and risks of anticancer therapy is based on the existing NCCN disease-specific guidelines, for that patient's cancer. Special attention should be given to the natural history of specific tumor, potential for response to further treatment, meaning of anticancer therapy to patient and family, impairment of vital organs, performance status, and serious comorbid conditions. Symptom assessment should look for common symptoms, such as pain, dyspnea, anorexia, cachexia, nausea, vomiting, constipation, malignant bowel obstruction, fatigue, weakness, asthenia, sleep disturbance, sedation, and delirium. Assessment of psychosocial distress should focus upon psychiatric, spiritual, and psychosocial issues according to the NCCN Distress Management Guidelines.

Special problems with social support and resources must be addressed and managed. Patients and their families should be asked about their personal goals and expectations; priorities for palliative care: goals and meaning of anticancer therapy and quality of life; and the patient's eligibility for hospice based upon needs that might be met by the hospice model of palliative care. Patients and families should also be assessed for their educational and informational needs and cultural factors affecting their care including values and preferences about information and communication and perception of the patient's disease status.

Criteria for early consultation with a palliative care specialist are based patient characteristics, social circumstances, and anticipatory bereavement issues (PAL–6). Patient based criteria include patients with limited treatment options, high risk of poor pain control, history of psychiatric disorder, refractory non-pain...
symptoms, history of allergies or adverse effects to multiple palliative interventions, unexpected ICU admissions, and high distress score (greater than 4) (see NCCN’s Distress Management Guidelines), cognitive impairment, severe comorbid conditions, communication barriers, and/or repeated requests for hastened death. Social circumstances or anticipatory bereavement issues that indicate a need for early referral for early consultation with a palliative care specialist include family/caregiver limitations, inadequate social support, financial limitations, limited access to care, family discord, intensely dependent relationships, financial limitations, limited access to care, family discord, patient’s concern regarding care of dependents, and/or a spiritual crisis.

Palliative Care Interventions

The panel has divided the patients into three groups to address the effect of life expectancy on the delivery of palliative care interventions: patients with a year to months to live, patients with months to weeks to live and dying patients in their final weeks to days. Patients in their final hours of life are referred to as “imminently dying” and may require special interventions (PAL-28). The panel recognizes the lack of precision of estimating life expectancy but believes that this delineation will be useful for the delivery of appropriate palliative care interventions. Optimal provision of palliative care requires ongoing reassessment and modification of strategies. Criteria include adequate pain and symptom control, reduction of patient/family distress, acceptable sense of control, relief of caregiver burden, strengthened relationships, optimized quality of life, and personal growth and enhanced meaning.26-29 The patient and family's personal, spiritual, cultural, and religious goals and expectations may change throughout these three time frames. Anticipation of patient and family needs is important.

For patients whose life expectancy is “a year to months” or “months to weeks,” it is important to determine how much information a patient wishes to know and how much of that information should be shared with the patient’s family. Patients will also require answers to any questions about what to expect in the next few months and anticipatory guidance on the dying process as well. In addition, it is necessary to determine the decision-making styles of patients and their families. This will help facilitate congruence of a patient’s goals and expectations with those of the family. It is also important to determine patients’ assessments of relative importance of quality of life compared to length of life. Patients should be assisted in reviewing and revising their life priorities, resolving their unfinished business, and putting their financial and personal affairs in order.

Dying patients may wish to prepare for death and to help prepare family members to go on without them. Both the patient and the family benefit from education on the dying process. Families should be guided through their anticipatory grief, and arrangements should be made to ensure that the patient’s and family's needs and goals regarding the dying process are respected. Planning to ensure continuing care and referrals to appropriate care are important. Arrangements should be available to ensure that the patient does not die alone unless that is the patient's preference.

Clinicians should discuss patient's prognosis with patients and their families clearly and consistently to help them develop realistic expectations. Information about the natural history of the specific tumor and the realistic outcomes of anticancer therapy should be included in the discussion. Many investigators have shown that seriously ill middle-aged and older patients tend to be more optimistic and less accurate about their prognosis than their
physicians, which can affect their preferences for cardiopulmonary resuscitation and for measures extending life.  

Spiritual and cultural issues are often best addressed through collaboration with pastoral care counselors, professional translators, the patient's personal clergy, and representatives from the patient's cultural community. Religious and cultural issues surrounding the beliefs and practices around the time of death must be anticipated and managed carefully. Finally, social support and resource management interventions should be provided to ensure a safe end-of-life care environment, a competent primary caregiver, and access to necessary medications and treatments. It is imperative for providers to be sensitive to cultural values that may influence the best way for such information to be presented and discussed.

Palliative care interventions for the management of specific symptoms as well the benefits and risks of anticancer therapy are discussed below as outlined in the algorithms. More palliative care interventions for other symptoms will be developed as deemed necessary after institutional review of these guidelines.

**Benefits and Risks of Anticancer therapy**

Patients who have years to months to live and a good performance status may be interested in continuing anticancer therapy to prolong survival and reduce cancer-related symptoms. Anticancer therapy may be conventional evidence-based treatment as outlined in the NCCN disease-specific guidelines or treatment in the context of a clinical trial (PAL-7). In some of the advanced stage cancers chemotherapy may be superior to best supportive care and may prolong survival. Patients with advanced non-small cell lung cancer who are not eligible for systemic chemotherapy may benefit from targeted therapies that are effective for relieving symptoms, maintaining stable disease, and improving quality of life without the adverse events that may be associated with cytotoxic cancer therapies. Physicians, patients, and their families should discuss goals, range of choices, benefits and risks of anticancer therapy and possible effects on quality of life. Patients with months to weeks to live are typically tired of therapy, homebound, and more concerned about the side effects of more treatment. They shift the focus of treatment from prolonging life towards maintaining quality of life. Those patients should be offered best supportive care, including referral to palliative care or hospice. Palliative care should not be described as "just hospice" to avoid demeaning the value of end of life care. In general, patients with weeks to days to live (ie, dying patients) should not be given anticancer therapy; instead they should be given intensive palliative care focusing mainly on symptom control and comfort.

**Dyspnea**

Dyspnea is one of the most common symptoms in patients with advanced lung cancer. In the management of dyspnea in patients with years to months to live, symptom intensity has to be assessed followed by treatment of underlying causes or comorbid conditions using chemotherapy or radiation therapy, thoracentesis or pleurodesis, bronchoscopy or bronchodiator diuretics, antibiotics or transfusions (PAL-9). Symptom intensity in non-communicative patients, with weeks to days to live, should be assessed using tachypnea or other distress markers of dyspnea. As the life expectancy decreases, the role of mechanical ventilation and oxygen diminishes while the role of opioids, benzodiazepines, and scopolamine increases (PAL-10).

**Anorexia/Cachexia**

Anorexia-cachexia syndrome is prevalent in most patients with...
advanced cancer. Anorexia is defined as loss of desire to eat. Cachexia results from loss of skeletal muscle mass leading to asthenia, changing body image and autonomic failure. In patients with a life expectancy of years to months interventions for anorexia or cachexia include treatment for early satiety, treatment of symptoms that interfere with intake or the use of appetite stimulants and/or evaluation of endocrine abnormalities. Nutrition support consultation or participation in a nutrition support clinical trials can be considered (PAL-11). The goals and intensity of nutritional support change as life expectancy is reduced to weeks to days. Family members should be made aware of alternate ways of caring for the dying patient. Overly aggressive enteral or parenteral nutrition therapies can actually increase the suffering of dying patients. Palliative care regarding hydration and nutrition in the final weeks of life typically includes the treatment of dry mouth and thirst, along with family education and support to deal with the psychosocial aspects of discontinuing feeding (PAL-12).

Nausea and Vomiting
Chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) has a major impact on a patient's quality of life. Nausea and vomiting (NV) induced by chemotherapy or radiation therapy should be managed as outlined in the NCCN Antiemesis guidelines. Continuous intravenous or subcutaneous infusions of different antiemetics may be necessary for the management of intractable NV. Non-specific nausea and vomiting can be managed with dopamine receptor antagonists or benzodiazepines (anxiety related nausea) (PAL-13). Persistent nausea and vomiting can be treated with 5-HT3 (5-hydroxytryptamine3) receptor antagonists and/or anticholinergic agents and/or antihistamines, corticosteroids, continuous infusion of antiemetics, antipsychotics (e.g., olanzapine or haloperidol) or cannabinoids. Alternative therapies (eg. acupuncture) or palliative sedation can also be considered (PAL-14).

Malignant bowel obstruction
Malignant bowel obstructions are usually diagnosed clinically and with radiography. Patients with years to months to live should be screened for malignant bowel obstructions and the reversible causes should be treated appropriately (PAL-16). In imminently dying patients with weeks to days to live, medical management is preferable to surgical management. CT scan is used to identify the cause of obstruction if surgical intervention is contemplated for improvement of quality of life. Surgical risks should be discussed with patient and family. Total parenteral nutrition (TPN) can be considered to improve quality of life in patients with a life expectancy of months to years.

Physical and Psychosocial Distress
Palliative care of physical symptoms should follow the NCCN Adult Cancer Pain Guidelines and NCCN Cancer-related Fatigue Guidelines. Special considerations in the implementation of these guidelines based on life expectancy are delineated in the algorithms. The major focus of these special considerations is the withholding and withdrawal of aggressive interventions, prevention and elimination of side effects associated with pharmacological pain management, the acceptance of loss of function for the sake of relief of symptoms, and the treatment of the unique symptoms of patients in their final hours of life. Nutrition support consult may also be considered.

Patients experiencing psychosocial distress should be assured that they will be cared for in a safe environment. They should be provided with emotional support to address any intra-family conflict regarding palliative care interventions. Patients and family members
benefit from ongoing discussion about the natural history of the disease and prognosis in clear, consistent language. Support and education should be provided to the caregiver(s) and family members. Patients should be reassessed regularly (PAL-20 and PAL-21). If psychosocial distress persists, palliative care options should be intensified and the patients should be managed according to the NCCN Distress Management Guidelines.

Advance Care Planning
Advance care planning in patients with a year to months to live should include the open discussion about palliative care options including hospice, the elicitation of personal values and preferences for end-of-life care, the exploration for congruence between the patient's wishes/expectations and those of the family/health care team, and the provision of information about advance directives. Patients should be asked if they have completed any advance care planning such as living wills, power of attorney, or specific limitations regarding life-sustaining treatments including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (PAL-24 and PAL-25). When the patient's life expectancy is reduced to months to weeks, the oncology team should actively facilitate completion of appropriate advance directives and should ensure their availability in all care settings. Where the patient wants to die should also be determined. Dying in a hospital can be traumatic for patients and their families, although some patients request to remain in a facility for terminal care. The provision of palliative care services has been shown to decrease deaths in an intensive care unit. Most cancer patients wish to die at home. According to the National Home and Hospice care survey, the number of adult cancer patients using hospice care doubled during 1991-1992 through 1999-2000. As the patient's life expectancy decreases down to months to weeks, compliance with advance directives should be ensured regardless of treatment setting. In patients with a life expectancy of only weeks to days, a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order should be obtained and honored. Portable treatment preference documents should be encouraged in states where they exist.

Special Palliative Care Interventions
Special palliative care interventions (PAL-27) include responses to requests for hastened death (physician-assisted suicide, active euthanasia). The most appropriate response to a request for assistance in suicide is to intensify palliative care. Open exploration of the patient's request for aid in dying can often identify unmet needs and new palliative care interventions that may be helpful. Alternatives to physician-assisted suicide such as treatment withdrawal, voluntary cessation of eating and drinking and/or sedation should be considered and discussed with the patient and family. Psychiatric consultation to diagnose and treat reversible causes of psychological suffering should be requested. The patient should be assured of the commitment of his or her health care team to providing continuing care. Although physician-assisted suicide, under specified conditions, is legal in the state of Oregon, euthanasia is not legal in any state in the USA.

Palliative Sedation
Palliative sedation can be an effective symptom control treatment for imminently dying patients or those with refractory symptoms and with a life expectancy of hours to days (PAL-29). Typical sedatives used for palliative sedation by parenteral infusions include pentobarbital, thiopental and midazolam. Palliative sedation is best performed by palliative care experts and has its ethical justification in the Doctrine of Double Effect, although clinicians may find that applying usual benefit/risk analysis to this type of intervention will
suffice in medical decision making. As patients are actively dying in their final hours of life, allow the patient and family to spend uninterrupted time together. Diagnostic tests should be discontinued, the family should be prepared and supported, and advanced directives should be honored. Secretions should be minimized and delirium controlled with regular administration of appropriate medications by whatever route of administration is feasible. Make sure the patient is repositioned regularly for comfort, and monitor the patient for urinary retention and fecal impaction. Privacy and respectful space for the family should be provided to facilitate closure. Most protocols for sedation for comfort at end of life include planned periods of medication withdrawal that allow reevaluation with direct assessment of the patient.

**Palliative Care Reassessment of Outcomes**

The outcome measures for these Palliative Care Guidelines are much more difficult to define that those for NCCN disease-specific guidelines. The panel adapted a list of end-of-life outcomes from several surveys of North American citizens. For the purpose of these guidelines, the NCCN panel has chosen Singer’s outcomes until more precise outcome measures are available. Satisfactory palliative care should provide the following: adequate pain and symptom management, reduction of patient and family distress, acceptable sense of control, relief of caregiver burden, optimized quality of life, personal growth and enhanced meaning, insofar as this is desired. Research is ongoing regarding better ways to measure “dying well.” For now, patients should be reassessed regularly for these five outcomes, and palliative care efforts should be intensified as appropriate. Again, cultural sensitivity is mandatory in this setting. Consultation with a psychiatrist and/or other mental health professionals to evaluate and treat pre-existing psychiatric disorders, substance abuse and dysfunctional adjustment reactions should be considered for some patients. See NCCN Distress Management Guidelines.

**After Death Care**

The Palliative Care Guidelines are the first NCCN guidelines to include death as an expected outcome and after-death care for the family as an essential part of the continuum of cancer care. This Guideline has modified this delineation of the attributes of satisfactory palliative care to include, adequate pain and symptom control, reduction of patient/family distress, acceptable sense of control, relief of caregiver burden, strengthened relationships, optimized quality of life, and personal growth and enhanced meaning. A “good death” has been defined as “one that is free from avoidable distress and suffering for patients, families and caregivers; in general accord with patients' and families' wishes; and reasonably consistent with clinical, cultural, and ethical standards” (PAL-30). Another definition of a good death is from Singer and colleagues who state that satisfactory palliative care should promote a good death by providing adequate pain and symptom management, reduction of distress to the patient and family, acceptable sense of control, relief of caregiver’s burden, strengthened personal relationships and optimized quality of life.

Comprehensive palliative care for the patient's family and caregivers continues after the patient's death. Immediate issues include ensuring culturally sensitive and respectful treatment of the body including removal of implanted devices, providing family time with the body, addressing survivor concerns about organ donation or autopsy, facilitating funeral arrangements through completion of necessary paperwork, and informing insurance companies and other health care providers of the patient's death. Bereavement...
support should be offered, beginning with a personal visit or telephone call from the patient’s primary oncology team, followed by a condolence letter. Funeral attendance can be considered for individual patients. For family members, grief should be normalized, risk factors for complicated grief should be identified, and complicated grief should be identified and treated. Such bereavement care is often best provided by an experienced hospice team or a skilled mental health care professional. The family may request a debriefing meeting and require assistance in identifying community bereavement resources. Health care professionals should review medical issues related to patient death, explore concerns and questions regarding quality of patient care, review emotional responses of family and staff to patient’s death. A well-supported end-of-life care experience by the family will facilitate the family’s acceptance of appropriate referral for cancer risk assessment and risk modification. Psychosocial support should also be provided for the staff.

Putting Palliative Care Guidelines into Practice

The NCCN Palliative Care Guidelines are aimed at providing the best quality of life that is possible for each patient and were developed to accompany the appropriate cancer treatment guidelines. Patients usually move from being ambulatory to being sedentary as their disease advances and their performance status lowers. When life expectancy is a matter of days or hours, patients may become unable to communicate. Such patients may be at home, living with a family member, or in a health care facility. By understanding the patient’s status relative to the natural disease trajectory and by using these Palliative Care Guidelines, the oncology team can provide the most appropriate treatment for each patient.

Cancer patient’s experiences throughout the course of the disease begin with the diagnosis. The oncologist and patient should discuss at the outset whether the treatment will be curative or palliative. Many palliative care questions must be considered early in each patient’s comprehensive cancer care. It is the responsibility of the primary oncology team to work with the patient to raise and answer these questions. It is important for the oncologist to identify the patient’s goals for the rest of his or her life, to get a better sense of whether the patient has understood and accepted the diagnosis and prognosis. Additionally, the oncologist must explain the types of therapies that are available and how these therapies can affect the patient’s daily life. As the cancer progresses and the value of further anticancer therapy diminishes, palliative therapy should be intensified. The issue of whether they want more anticancer therapy must be openly addressed. The delivery of clear and consistent prognostic information can help patients make the most appropriate decisions.

Patients should be made aware of the fact that receiving anticancer therapy does not have to sidetrack them from addressing end-of-life issues. Collaborating with palliative care experts extends the oncologist’s therapeutic repertoire and diminishes the stress of caring for patients who have incurable disease. Increasing emphasis on palliative care in oncology should improve patient outcomes and provide new avenues for clinical research and professional satisfaction. Timely introduction of members of the institutional or community palliative care team allows patients to meet the individuals who will help them and their families through their experience. Because the diagnosis of cancer and impending death is such a frightening experience, it is important to try to alleviate those fears by assuring the patient that the members of a
team will work with the patient and family to make things less burdensome. Additionally, it is important to discuss the natural history of the patient's disease and prognosis with the family and palliative care team to anticipate and manage symptoms and problems commonly associated with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. The combined efforts of the oncology team and the hospice/palliative care team can improve the overall outcome for patients and their families.

Palliative care applied late in the course of the disease is designed to help guide the patient and family to understand the disease and to begin to make end-of-life plans. Sometimes the patient and family do not accept the prognosis or do not begin to make end-of-life preparations. This may be a sign that the patient does not fully understand the disease. Palliative care supports education so the patient can better understand the disease. The oncologist must ensure that advance care plans are in place as early as possible in the disease trajectory. This focus on the patients' wishes assures patients that they will be provided with no more and no less aggressive care than they desire and also relieves them of concerns about burdening family members with difficult end-of-life decisions. The combined efforts of the oncology team and the hospice/palliative care team can improve the overall outcome for patients and their families.

Hope

NCCN Palliative Care Guidelines are intended to help oncology teams provide the best care possible for their patients with incurable cancer. During the next few years, the panel will complete the details of specific palliative care interventions and will refine the palliative care reassessment outcome measures. The panel will also incorporate information from the institutions that review and implement these guidelines. Additionally, the panel will try to address barriers to access to high-quality end-of-life care. The care outlined in these guidelines provides a different kind of hope than the hope for cure of the disease itself. Palliative care provides hope for dignity, comfort, and closure as well as for growth at the end of life.

Disclosures for the NCCN Palliative Care Guideline Panel

At the beginning of each panel meeting to develop NCCN guidelines, panel members disclosed financial support they have received in the form of research support, advisory committee membership, or speakers' bureau participation. Members of the panel indicated that they have received support from the following: Abbott Laboratories, Alder, Baxter Pharmaceuticals, Berlex, Centocor, Cephalon/American Pain Foundation, Cougar Biotech, Curagen, Endo Pharmaceuticals, GlaxoSmithKline, Insyst Therapeutics, Merck & Co., Inc., Methyngene, MGI Pharma, Inc., Par Pharmaceutical, Progenics, Purdue Pharma, Sanofi-Aventis, Savient Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Supergen and Valeant Pharmaceuticals. Some panel members do not accept any support from industry. The panel did not regard any potential conflicts of interest as sufficient reason to disallow participation in panel deliberations by any member.
### Table 1

**Palliative Care Internet Resources for Clinicians**

#### Palliative Care Clinical Competencies

1. **www.epeconline.net**
   - Education on Palliative and End of Life Care (EPEC)
   - Comprehensive curriculum covering fundamentals of palliative medicine, free downloadable power point and teaching guides

2. **www.eperc.mcw.edu**
   - End of Life/Palliative Education Resource Center (EPERC): Medical educator resources for peer-reviewed palliative care teaching materials

3. **www.StopPain.org**
   - Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Medicine at Beth Israel Medical Center: Clinical, educational, professional, and public resources

4. **www.palliativedrugs.com**
   - Palliativedrugs.com: Extensive information on pharmacologic symptom management

5. **www.aahpm.org**
   - American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine: Physician membership organization; board review courses, publications

6. **www.abhpm.org**
   - American Board of Hospice and Palliative Medicine: Physician board certification

#### Palliative Care Program Development

1. **www.hms.harvard.edu/cdi/pallcare**
   - Center for Palliative Care at Harvard Medical School: Faculty development courses, other educational programs

2. **www.nationalconsensusproject.org**
   - National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care Clinical practice guidelines

3. **www.americangeriatrics.org/products/positionpapers**
   - American Geriatrics Society: Clinical guidelines on pain management in the elderly

#### Palliative Care Leadership Centers

1. **www.capc.org**
   - Center to Advance Palliative Care. Technical assistance for clinicians and hospitals seeking to establish or strengthen a palliative care program

2. **www.capc.org/pclc**
   - Palliative Care Leadership Centers: Six exemplary palliative care programs providing site visits, hands-on training, and technical assistance to support new palliative care clinicians and programs nationwide

3. **www.promotingexcellence.org**
   - Promoting Excellence in End-of-Life Care: Organization and website supporting innovative approaches to delivery of palliative care, plus comprehensive Web-based resources

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*aAll websites accessed July 27, 2005.
References


40. Temel JS, Pirl WF, T.J. L. Comprehensive symptom management


