

Palliative/Terminal Care session for foundation year doctors

Aims

- To understand the natural history of life-limiting illnesses
- To know how treatment priorities change with disease progression
- To understand the ethical and legal issues particular to end of life care
- To understand the principles of the medical management of the terminal phase
- To be aware of the emotional impact on families, staff and yourself

Consider terminal care situations you have been involved in. What went well? What problems occurred?
What issues do you want to cover today?

Recognising the terminal phase

Case 1. Bob is 68. He has metastatic colorectal cancer. He and his wife are increasingly concerned about his condition. He asks the staff nurse 'how long have I got?'. The staff nurse asks you to speak to them.

How do you estimate prognosis?

How could you approach this issue with Bob and his wife?

How do you know when a patient is entering the terminal phase of their illness?

Resuscitation

Case 2 Your consultant says 'Bob is dying. Get a DNAR form signed'

What is resuscitation?

Who can make the decision?

How do you talk to patients about it?

Medical management of the terminal phase

Case 3 Everyone agrees that Bob is dying. He is not for resuscitation.

- He is mostly bed bound and requires assistance with his personal care. He is still managing some oral fluids and solids. Amend his prescription sheet as you see appropriate.

- He can no longer manage his tablets. Once again consider changing his prescription.

- Do you want to prescribe parenteral fluids?

Consequences

How did it feel when your first patient died?

What can you say to bereaved relatives?

How would you support a junior member of your team who is struggling to deal with the deaths of patients?

What risk factors for abnormal grief/ bereavement reactions do you know?