

Intensive Caring

Reminding Patients They Matter



A New Paradigm in Caring for Suffering Patients

Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the modern hospice movement, famously said, “You matter because you are you, and you matter to the last moment of your life.” **Intensive Caring is a new paradigm in caring for patients who are suffering.** It incorporates various components that collectively describe a way of being with patients who have lost hope, who have lost their sense of meaning or purpose, and who ultimately feel they no longer matter.

Intensive Caring offers a way for all health care professionals to care for patients confronting the enormity of human suffering. It provides an opportunity to target achievable goals, focusing on ways to affirm that patients matter. Its individual elements are well described in the literature and encompass presence, compassion, and hope. It has been more than 50 years since Dame Cicely shared the wisdom informing this clinical approach. Decades later, when medicine’s reach to fix exceeds its grasp, the time to consider the role of Intensive Caring is now.



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Five Elements of Intensive Caring



Non-abandonment

- Committed, quality connection
- Ongoing support



Acknowledging Personhood

- Enhance empathy, respect, connectedness
- Affirm worth of who they are, were, or tried to be and what they achieved or tried to accomplish



Knowing What's Possible

- Finding hope for psychological, spiritual, and physical comfort
- Hope for minimal suffering and a peaceful death
- Finding meaning and purpose in
 - * Relationships
 - * Imparting words/sentiments that need to be shared, such as reconciliation, forgiveness, love, affirmation of feelings
 - * Modeling how to die
- Guiding families toward viable opportunities
 - * Time
 - * Connection
 - * Comfort
 - * Forgiveness
 - * Goodbyes



Dignity Affirming Presence

- Being compassionate and empathic
- Being respectful and nonjudgmental
- Being genuine and authentic
- Being trustworthy
- Being fully present
- Valuing intrinsic worth of the patient
- Being mindful of boundaries and being emotionally resilient



Therapeutic Humility

- Tolerate clinical ambiguity
- Accept and honor the patient's expertise
- Trust in the process
- Avoid the need to fix

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