

COVID-19 Conversation Guide for Inpatient Care

SET UP

This is a difficult and scary time with the coronavirus. I'm hoping we can talk about the upcoming hours and days and what's important to you so we can provide you with the best care. **Is that okay?**
Is there anyone that you would want to join us by phone or video?

ASSESS

What about your health are you **most worried about** right now?
Thank you for sharing that with me.

Can I share some information with you about how this illness might affect you?

SHARE

Many people will recover from this infection. We will do everything we can to help you recover. As you've probably heard, some people get so sick that they do not survive. **[Pause]**

[If Normal Risk] Because there is some uncertainty about how this illness affects people, we are asking **everyone** to share what would be important if they became very sick and couldn't speak for themselves.

[If High Risk] Because of your [high risk condition], if **you** get really sick, I worry that the treatments that we can use to try to help people get better, like breathing machines or CPR, are not likely to work or get you back to the quality of life you had before. **[Pause] This must be hard to hear.**

EXPLORE

What is **most important** for your loved ones and medical team to know if you were to get very sick?

What **abilities** are so important to your life that you can't imagine living without them?

Some people are willing to go through a lot, including being on machines for many weeks, even if there is only a small chance that this could help them survive. Others avoid these treatments to focus primarily on comfort, especially if the medical team thought the treatments wouldn't work or would leave someone unable to do things that are important to them. **How do you think about this?**

If you couldn't speak for yourself, **who do you trust** to make medical decisions for you?

How much do they know about what is important to you?

CLOSE

This can be hard to talk about. I really appreciate your sharing this information with me.

I heard you say that ___ is really important to you. Given what you told me, and what we know about your current health, I would recommend that we... **[CHOOSE A or B]**

A. use intensive care if necessary, including CPR or breathing machines. If something changes to make us worry that these treatments are not likely to work, we will tell you or your [trusted decision maker]. Is that okay?

B. provide only treatments that we think will be helpful. This means that we would not do CPR or breathing machines but will provide all other available treatments to help you recover and be comfortable. Is that okay?

We can revisit this at any time. We will do everything we can to help you and your family through this.



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CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION

What? This communication tool offers language to assist clinicians in having conversations with patients who have suspected or confirmed Covid-19 about their values and preferences. This can inform decisions about life-sustaining treatments and ensure the highest quality care.

Why? Communication with hospitalized patients with confirmed or suspected Covid-19 about their treatment preferences presents unique challenges. These include uncertainty about illness trajectory, [high risk of critical illness or death](#) for some, high levels of distress, and use of virtual communication platforms. High quality conversations that help patients understand their specific vulnerabilities and share their worries and priorities can inform shared decision-making about life sustaining treatments.

Who? The Guide is for all inpatient clinicians who take care of patients with Covid-19. This conversation is for all patients in the hospital who have suspected or confirmed Covid-19.
NOTE: If using crisis standards of care, use a tool adapted for that purpose.

Where? Inpatient setting: emergency department, the medical floor, or ICU.

When? As early in the admission as possible, given the uncertainty of the clinical trajectory.

Tips for successful use:

1. Watch the demo video.
2. Read the guide aloud before using it with a patient or surrogate.
3. Use the exact words on the Guide to reduce your cognitive load
4. Use silence and acknowledge [emotions](#) when they arise.
5. When working with surrogates, consider using video where possible rather than phone.
6. When working with interpreters, have a discussion with the interpreter in advance to review the Guide and discuss potential challenges.
7. Never struggle alone: Debrief with a colleague for support and self-care.