Death and Dying in the Critical Care Unit

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Dying with Dignity
Death and Dying in the Critical Care Across America

• 540,000 Americans die in ICU’s annually
• 1 in 5 receive ICU services before they die
• 59% of all hospital deaths occur in the ICU
• 80% of all terminal inpatient costs

McAdam & Puntillo, 2010
Death and Dying in Critical Care Across America (cont.)

• 28% of Medicare patients who die are treated in ICU’s in last 6 months of life

• 20% of American deaths occur in a critical care unit or soon after receiving ICU care

Angus et al., 2004
The Need for Improved Care at the End of Life (EOL)

- Early to mid 1900’s
- Current Health Management

Coyle, 2010; Saunders, 2004
## Cause of Death/Demographic and Social Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early 1900s</th>
<th>Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine's Focus</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause of Death</td>
<td>Infectious Diseases/Communicable Diseases</td>
<td>Chronic Illnesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death rate</td>
<td>1720 per 100,000 (1900)</td>
<td>741.0 per 100,000 (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Life Expectancy</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>78.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site of Death</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Strangers/Health Care Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease/Dying Trajectory</td>
<td>Relatively Short</td>
<td>Prolonged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different Causes of Death

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Ethnic Origin
- Disparities
Dying with Dignity: What are the barriers to the improvement of the dying process and dying with dignity in the Critical Care Unit!!
Barriers to Quality Care at the End of Life (Cont.)

- Delayed or no access to palliative care services
- Confusion about when to consult or transfer
- Regulation of controlled substances
- Poor communication
- Lack of comprehensive plan of care
Barriers to Quality End-of-Life Care in Critical Care

- Failure to acknowledge the limits of medicine, especially critical care
- Inappropriate use of aggressive curative treatment
- Difficulties with prognostication
- Lack of adequate training of professionals

Coyne, 2010; Glare et al., 2003; Vigano et al., 2000, NCP, 2009
Dying With Dignity

• Critical Care Nurses are a valuable resource to improve and address the needs of patients and families facing life-threatening illnesses in a variety of clinical settings.
Dying with Dignity!!
Who’s Responsible?

• Doctors
• Nurses
• Families
• Patients
• Friends
Thank You!!