Bridging the Gap of Palliative Care in the ICU
A Gap Analysis to Evaluate Palliative Care Services and Critical Communication Skills

Use the following scales to assess the application of palliative care and critical communication skills in your unit. Determine your own comfort level with providing primary palliative care, then consider how consistently you and your colleagues identify the need for palliative care and how often the match between patient/family goals and the plan of care is assessed.

1. How often do you feel comfortable providing primary palliative care to seriously ill patients as part of your nursing practice?

Need help getting there?

- Be deliberate in applying specific communication strategies when you identify patients with serious illness who may benefit from the additional support of palliative care
- Form a team to identify the barriers to implementation. Include physicians and other members of the healthcare team who are key stakeholders
- Review the communication tools developed by IMPACT ICU and select the ones that best fit your style

Resources:
- Tools and Tactics
- Watch the webinar with your colleagues and discuss the strategies described: Palliative Care in the ICU: Critical Communication Skills
- View AACN’s e-learning, Promoting Excellence in Palliative and End of Life Care to learn more about palliative care and communication skills
2. How consistently do you and your colleagues evaluate the need for palliative care among the patients in your unit?

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Need help getting there?
- Collaborate with your Nurse Manager, advanced practice nurse, or clinical practice committee to:
  - Determine strategies for identifying seriously ill patients who would benefit from palliative care
  - Consider implementing routine screening with the assessment tool referenced in the webinar and included in the webinar toolkit
- Educate your peers on the availability of palliative care consults and the use of primary palliative care to address patient needs
- Discuss with other members of your healthcare team, including medical providers, therapists, and social workers, how palliative care would benefit your practice and enhance the care your patients receive
- Review current protocols for consulting palliative care and update or revise as needed

Resources:
- Tools and Tactics
- Primary Palliative Care Assessment Tool
- Please see the reference section at the end of: Palliative Care in the ICU: Critical Communication Skills presentation
3. How often do you and your healthcare team evaluate the match between the plan of care and patient/family goals?

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Need help getting there?
- Apply the communication tools described in the webinar to gather information about patient/family goals
- Attend rounds or seek a separate time to validate your understanding of the plan of care with the healthcare team and relay information about the patient/family goals
- The next time you attend a family meeting, take a few minutes afterward to debrief with the team about the communication that took place
- Analyze all of the transition barriers and develop strategies to address them
- Assess whether your unit’s admission assessment identifies patient’s baseline status, and identify areas that need updating

Resources:
- Tools and Tactics
- The website: getpalliativecare.org
- View and analyze the webinar: Palliative Care in the ICU: Critical Communication Skills. Be sure to use supportive materials such as:
  - References section
  - Roadmap with three different conversations