

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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STATUS: INFORMATION

CATEGORY: HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LETTER

Title: Care Decisions for the Last Days of Life

Date of Expiry / Review : August 2023

For Action by:
Health boards and trusts

Action required by: With immediate effect
See paragraph 6

Sender:
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Enclosure(s): None (See hyperlinks)

To: Chief Executives, NHS Wales
Cc: Health board and trust end of life care leads

September 2021

Dear Chief Executives

ALL WALES GUIDANCE: CARE DECISIONS FOR THE LAST DAYS OF LIFE

A key element of patient need, and those of their families, is good 'end of life' care. The purpose of this Welsh Health Circular is to highlight the importance of the continuation of good patient care through to the very end of life, irrespective of a person's condition or where care is provided, be that at home, including care homes, in hospital or in a hospice unit.

The recent COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted the importance for all staff to know and understand about the value of good end of life care, including the steps to be taken to ensure comfort, provide good communication, symptom control and how to seek additional advice and help. The importance of delivering high quality care and supporting NHS and other care staff, particularly those who are not regularly caring for dying patients and their families is, at this time of global pandemic, fully recognised. The Care Decisions Guidance (CDG) for the last days of life supports clinical staff to provide good end of life care; the updated version 11 is now available to health boards and trusts.

Background

The quality of care provided to a dying patient has a lasting effect on families and carers. Good quality end of life care and good communication between professionals and families supports individuals at the end of life and helps families through bereavement. The CDG is evidence based good practice guidance and is a nationally recognised key resource for supporting all who deliver care in the last days and hours of life.

The refreshed version 11 CDG has been developed with the support of stakeholders, partners and the support of patient/carer representative groups around Wales. It is intended for use in all settings: in people's homes, in care homes, in all hospital settings including acute, community and mental health hospitals, and in hospices and specialist palliative care units in the NHS and the voluntary sector.

Version 11 includes two supplementary guidance notes – *the All Wales Supplementary Symptom Control Guidance for palliative management of patients with COVID-19 infection*. This supplements the Symptom Management Guidelines in the CDG, to support the care of adult patients with COVID-19 infection, who require palliative management of their condition. The second supplement is the *All Wales Symptom Control Guidance for palliative management of patients with diabetes*. In addition, there is also a 'Considering Diversity' Appendix; a resource for healthcare staff, *to support the delivery of person-centred care at the end of life*.

Implementation

The aim of this Welsh Health Circular is to inform all health boards and trusts in Wales of the replacement of the current CDG with immediate effect. We want to ensure that staff are conversant with its requirements and fully equipped to provide the level of consistent care appropriate to patients and those important to them in the last days of life. Health boards are requested to support their organisation, voluntary sector services and partners to assist with the dissemination, uptake and implementation of the version 11 CDG.

All health boards and trusts have key professionals who lead on and provide training and support in the use of the CDG for the Last Days of Life. We ask that particular attention is paid to settings where use of the CDG has in the past been less frequent and to support use of the tools for monitoring and audit of care in the last days of life and for measurement of outcomes and experience.

The CDG can be accessed using the following links:

<https://collaborative.nhs.wales/implementation-groups/end-of-life-care/care-decisions-guidance-for-the-last-days-of-life/>

[Care Decisions Guidance for the Last Days of Life \(short text hyperlink\)](#)

<https://cydweithrediad.gig.cymru/grwpiau-gweithredu/gofal-diwedd-oes1/canllawiau-penderfyniadau-gofal-ar-gyfer-dyddiau-olaf-bywyd/>

[Canllawiau penderfyniadau gofal ar gyfer dyddiau olaf bywyd \(short text hyperlink\)](#)

The CDG for the Last Days of Life should be considered and put into practice alongside, and in conjunction with both the 2015 NICE Guidance '*Care of the Dying Adult*' and the Palliative Care and End of Life Care Delivery Plan, which has, together with its associated funding, been extended until April 2022.

If you have any general comments, please contact the Older People's Health and Chronic Conditions Branch through Vivienne.collins@gov.wales tel: 03000 615922. Or for specific information please contact Melanie.lewis5@wales.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR CHRIS JONES