Registered Nursing Serious Illness Designation: Foundational Skills

This Learning Pathway provides comprehensive online education in nursing practices to improve quality of life for patients living with serious illness. Nurses can use Serious Illness Designation to demonstrate expertise in working with this patient population.

Assess the Needs and Concerns of Patients

Delivering Serious News to Patients and Caregivers

Learn best practices for having patient-centered conversations about a serious illness diagnosis. These discussions are the foundation of building a trusting clinician-patient relationship.

Revised Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS-r)

Assesses for nine symptoms experienced by patients with serious illness and quantifies their severity. Alberta Health Services.

PHQ-4 Validated Screening Tool for Anxiety and Depression

Brief (4-question) screening tool for anxiety and depression.

Social Needs Screen

Assessment tool and resource list to address social risk factors.

FICA Spiritual Assessment Tool

Short conversation guide to elicit information about a patient's spiritual history and preferences.

CAPC Palliative Care Referral Criteria

Checklist of triggers for referral to a specialty palliative care team.

Strengthen the Clinician-Patient Relationship and Understand Care Goals

Leading Goals of Care Conversations
Learn best practices for building trust, eliciting patient values, and having patient-centered conversations about goals of care.

The Role of the RN in Advance Care Planning
A position statement from Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) is that healthcare decision-making is very personal and fluid. It is part of the nurse's role to advocate for the patient and family regarding their healthcare preferences.

Responding to Emotion: Vital Talk Quick Guide for Conversations
Conversation framework and key phrases to share empathy and deepen your relationship with your patient. Vital Talk, 2019.

Unconscious Bias: What It Is, How It Influences Health Care, and What You Can Do About It
Defines unconscious bias and how it influences patient care, and provides ways to reduce the impact of unconscious bias on care delivery.

Talking with Patients About Hospice
This resource lists step-wise tips to foster comfortable, productive dialogue for 'the hospice conversation'.

Manage Pain and Symptoms

Course 1: Pain and its Impact on Our Patients
Learn to define and characterize pain, recognize the prevalence of pain, understand disparities in pain management based on race, ethnicity, and gender.

Course 3: Matching Treatment to Pain Type
Gain an overview of pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic pain treatments, including risks and benefits, and learn how to match the analgesic to pain type.

Course 6: Creating a Pain Treatment Plan and Monitoring Effectiveness
Learn to develop a pain treatment plan with realistic goals and proper documentation, and implement universal precautions to help with the risk of opioid use disorder.

Course 8: Problems with Opioid Prescribing: Is it an Opioid Use Disorder?
Learn how to identify and diagnose opioid use disorder (OUD) and practice communicating with patients about OUD and pain management.

Course 2: How to Perform a Comprehensive Pain Assessment

Learn the components of a comprehensive pain assessment and its importance in safe and effective pain management.

Anxiety

After completing this course, learners will be equipped with evidence-based strategies to identify and treat anxiety in patients living with a serious illness.

Constipation

Constipation occurs in at least 70% of patients living with a serious illness and often goes unrecognized. After completing this course, learners will have the tools to successfully identify and manage the impact of constipation.

Depression

After completing this course, learners will have the tools to accurately identify and treat depression in patients living with a serious illness.

Dyspnea

After completing this course, learners will have the tools they need to manage dyspnea, including the physical causes of shortness of breath and the emotional impact on the patient.

Nausea/Vomiting

Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms of serious illness and can cause dangerous complications. After completing this course, learners will be equipped with practical skills to identify, manage, and reduce these symptoms.

Cognitive Assessment Tools

Recommended validated cognitive assessment tools.

Predicting and Minimizing Risks and Helping Patients Plan Ahead

Safe and Age-Friendly Care for Older Adults

This course provides context and best practices for identifying older adults at risk for poor outcomes, including falls, delirium, and caregiving challenges.

Supporting the Caregivers of People with Serious Illness

This course offers tools and guidance for assessing and addressing the needs of caregivers of people with serious illness.

Coordinating Care and Planning Ahead

Guidance for all clinicians on improving communication and ensuring smooth transitions of care for patients living with serious illness.

Supporting Patients with Serious Illness to Plan Ahead

Considerations for clinicians, patients, and families upon diagnosis, including advance care planning, personal care needs, legal and financial planning, work and retirement planning, and prevention of common medical risks.

Care Planning Conversations

Learn techniques to help patients and their caregivers plan for the future, both during the early stages of a serious illness and as a disease progresses.

FindHelp.org

National database of community services - enter a zip code and locate assistance with food, housing, health services, care needs, and other resources.

Psychosocial Assessment for Patients with Serious Illness

Assessment questions to help nurses understand the impact of serious illness on a patient's relationships, social and spiritual supports, financial stability, and trust in the health care system. Fast Facts, April 2020

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