

April 21 End of Life Care Update

Dear Colleagues,

There is an updated referral form for the North East Essex End of Life Referral Hub based at St Helena that includes St Helena specialist palliative care referrals, referrals for virtual ward, the hospice inpatient unit and the community end of life teams including palliative care district nursing. This form will also be circulated via the CCG communications. Please replace the interim Covid pandemic referral form on your systems from April 2020 with the form attached here:



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To mark Dying Matters Week 2021 St Helena is joining forces with St Elizabeth Hospice and St Nicholas Hospice Care to promote ways communities can support one another during difficult times in their lives.

The collaboration between the three hospices will see us host a number of online events which will offer guidance and encourage the public to support each other with kindness during some of the most difficult times in their lives, such as the death of a loved one or the diagnosis of a serious illness.

More than 30 events will be held both online and in person during the awareness week including 'Care and loss during COVID - How do we Heal?', "We're all going to die, so let's talk about death", an open and frank conversation between two young men and 'Thinking ahead – planning for end of life'. Please do use the communication channels open to your practice and your patient participation group to promote these events to any patients who may find them helpful.

To see the full Dying Matters events programme, please visit www.compassionatecommunitieseast.com

We are seeking expressions of interest from any Non Medical Prescribers who would wish to expand their scope of practice to include prescribing at the end of life. St Helena is considering creating a package of education and support to enable NMPs to widen their skills in this field and wishes to understand the local appetite for this. Should this be of interest to you or your team please email kchumbley@sthelena.org.uk

There is going to be another public facing campaign to promote the My Care Choices register in Dying Matters week in May, you may well see advertisements on buses or pharmacy bags as well as on social and local media. Please do continue to consider My Care Choices for your patients living with life limiting disease and frailty. More information is available to them at www.mycarechoices.online from where a booklet can be downloaded.

The CQC recently published a report on the use of 'Do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation' decisions available at: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/protect-respect-connect-decisions-about-living-dying-well-during-covid-19>

The CQC found inconsistent practice around communication with patients and their families around this issue. The North East Essex Palliative and End of Life Care Community of Practice will be discussing this topic at the next event at 1.30pm on the 17th June. Please do save this time in your diary if you would like to join us and invitations will be circulated in the next few weeks. Please do involve patients and their families in DNACPR decisions, document mental capacity assessments where relevant and ask for involvement of an independent advocate (IMCA) should there not be a next of kin, referral forms are available at: <https://www.rethinkssexadvocacy.org/make-a-referral/>

Colleagues are reminded that the North East Essex Covid anticipatory prescribing authorisation template has now been withdrawn. Please review the medication doses for anyone who may have had an authorisation created with the higher doses of sedation recommended for someone dying of Covid -19 that may now be inappropriately high if they deteriorate from another cause.

Recently we have received some complaints from patient's families concerning the practice of virtual verification of death. Families have reported distress at being asked to facilitate this for their loved one. The NHS and BMA guidance on virtual verification is clear that no one should be pressurised to support this process for their relative or their care home resident if they are not happy to do so. The local policy for verification of death is for this preferably to be done in person, although it does acknowledge that the NHS and BMA policies do allow for virtual verification if necessary within the context of the pandemic only.

The St Helena virtual ward now has ongoing funding for 8 beds for people in the last 2 weeks of life and works in collaboration with the end of life rapid response domiciliary care service supplied by Bluebird which can accept people in the last six weeks of life. These services have enabled more people to be cared for within their own home where this is their preferred place. Please do refer any patients who may benefit from this service to the end of life hub based at St Helena.

Thankyou for your ongoing work supporting local people at the end of life in North East Essex. More people are benefitting from planned, supported and coordinated care due to your commitment and collaboration with other local services.

Dr K Chumbley

North East Essex Alliance Lead for End of Life Care

29/4/21