



Assessing and Managing Patient Mental Health Toolkit

CHECKLIST

- Screening and assessment of psychological and existential symptoms for patients approaching the end of life is important. Check to see which screening and assessment tools are routinely used in your workplace.

- Remember that for many patients, this may be the first time they have spoken about anxiety or depression, and so screening requires sensitivity and care, using a person-centred approach. Explain to the patient that anxiety and depression are common at the end of life and that screening helps ensure they receive appropriate support and treatment.

- Patients with psychological symptoms often need support from specialists in psychology or psychiatry. Patients who present as high risk will need more immediate support. Check the mental health services referral pathways and triggers in your workplace and follow the relevant procedures.

- When managing psychological symptoms for patients at the end of life, focus on improving quality of life, while considering the patient's underlying illness and prognosis, comorbidities, current medications, ability to participate in treatment, personal goals, and care preferences. Some patients may have symptoms that can be managed well with non-pharmacological treatments.

- Cultural safety is especially important in mental health care because culture strongly influences how people understand distress, seek help, experience discrimination, and interpret mental health diagnoses. Remember that people from different cultures may express distress in different ways. Work to incorporate culturally meaningful practices into patient care.

HELPFUL LINKS

- American Psychological Association. 2022. [The role of psychology in palliative care](#)
- Arnold RM. 2024. Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin. [Screening for Depression in Palliative Care](#)

VIDEOS, BLOGS, PODCASTS

- NSW Government Agency for Clinical Innovation. 2023. Palliative care video library. [Anxiety and sleep disturbances](#)
- NSW Government Agency for Clinical Innovation. 2023. Palliative care video library. [Depression](#)
- McKeown D. 2020. Palliative Care Australia. [Hoping for the best and planning for the rest](#)
- Yardley S. 2026. End-of-Life Essentials Blog. [Supporting Mental Health in End-of-Life Care](#)

FURTHER READING

- Atchison K, Watt JA, Ewert D, Toohey AM, Ismail Z, Goodarzi Z. Non-pharmacologic and pharmacologic treatments for anxiety in long-term care: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Age Ageing*. 2022 Sep 2;51(9):afac195. [doi:10.1093/ageing/afac195](#)
- Sewtz C, Muscheites W, Grosse-Thie C, Kriesen U, Leithaeuser M, Glaeser D, Hansen P, Kundt G, Fuellen G, Junghanss C. Longitudinal observation of anxiety and depression among palliative care cancer patients. *Ann Palliat Med*. 2021 Apr;10(4):3836-3846. [doi:10.21037/apm-20-1346](#)