



Chronic Complex Illness End-of-Life Care Toolkit

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Are there patients who are readmitted to your hospital regularly, perhaps with exacerbations of serious chronic conditions? Think about these patients and ask The Surprise Question about each of them: Would you be surprised if this patient dies within the next few months/weeks/days?
- ☐ If the patient has not yet started a discussion about their end-of-life care or their future, then be proactive: ask the patient's permission to start a dialogue. Remember, some patients will wish to know everything, other patients only some things and a smaller group will not want to know details about end of life at all – so ask.
- ☐ For patients who wish to discuss end-of-life care, provide some ideas for them to think about in formulating their preferences for care. Use “other people” framing if that is easier: For example, “Other people with conditions like yours sometimes plan ahead for unexpected events such as sudden admission to hospital and...”
- ☐ Review medications the patient is currently taking and consider the steps for deprescribing.
- ☐ Consider how you foster hope in conversations with patients and their families. Can you compassionately balance hope while also being honest, open and clear? Are you able to explore and facilitate the patient's realistic goals and wishes on a day-to-day basis, where appropriate? Ask the patient, “What are you hoping for?”

HELPFUL LINKS

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2024. [Chronic conditions](#)
- Jennings KS, et al. 2024. Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin. 2019. [The Surprise Question as a Prognostic Tool](#)

VIDEOS, BLOGS, PODCASTS

- Canadian Virtual Hospice. 2011. [Dr Kevin Brazil: Moral Distress in Delivering End of Life Care – Palliative Care](#)
- Lacey, J. 2021. End-of-Life Essentials Blog: [Accepting and supporting death in acute care is a needed first step](#)
- Thillainadesan J, Le Couteur D. 2026. CareSearch Palliative Perspectives: [End-of-life care in dementia: Are we going enough?](#)

FURTHER READING

- Etkind SN, Koffman J. Approaches to managing uncertainty in people with life-limiting conditions: role of communication and palliative care. Postgrad Med J. 2016;92(1089):412-417. [doi:10.1136/postgradmedj-2015-133371](#)
- Rosenberg A, Arnold RM, Schenker Y. Holding Hope for Patients With Serious Illness. JAMA. 2021;326(13):1259-1260. [doi:10.1001/jama.2021.14802](#)
- Sav A, Salehi A, Mair FS, McMillan, SS. Measuring the burden of treatment for chronic disease: implications of a scoping review of the literature. BMC Med Res Methodol. 2017;17:140. [doi.org/10.1186/s12874-017-0411-8](#)