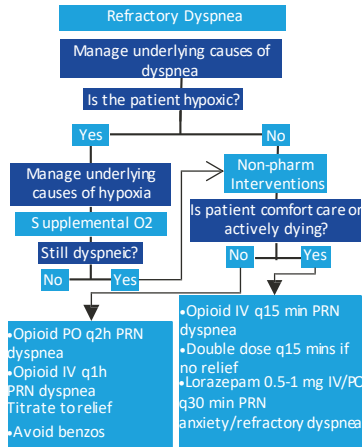


# Palliative Care for COVID-19



## Relief of Dyspnea



### Non-Pharmacologic Interventions:

- Bring patient upright or to sitting position
- Consider mindfulness, mindful breathing

### Pharmacologic Interventions:

- Opioids are treatment of choice for refractory dyspnea
- For symptomatic patients, using PRN or bolus dosing titrated to relief is more effective and safe compared to starting an opioid infusion

### Dosing Tips:

- For opioid naive patients
  - PO Morphine 2.5-5 mg
  - PO Oxycodone 2.5-5 mg
  - IV/SC Morphine 2-4 mg
  - IV/SC Hydromorphone 0.4-0.6 mg
- Consider smaller doses for elderly/frail
- Refer to comfort care order set for additional dosing guidance



## Opioid Quick Tips

### Pharmacodynamics of Opioids:

- Time to peak effect / Duration of Action
- PO Opioids: 30-60 minutes / 3-4 hours
- IV Opioids: 5-15 minutes / 3-4 hours
- Time to peak effect is the same for analgesia, relief of dyspnea, and sedation

### Other Opioid Principles:

- If initial dose of IV opioid is ineffective after 2 doses at least 15 minutes apart, double the dose
- Typically need 6-8 hours of controlled symptoms to calculate a continuous opioid infusion
- If starting a continuous infusion, do not change more often than every 6 hours. Adjust infusion dose based on the 24 hour sum of PRNs

### Relative Strengths & Conversion

Opioid Agent	Oral Dose	IV Dose
Morphine	30	10
Oxycodone	20	--
Hydromorphone	7.5	1.5

### If Using Opioids, Start a Bowel Regimen:

- Goal is 1 BM QD or QOD, no straining
- Senna 2 tabs q HS, can increase to 4 tabs BID
- Add Miralax 17 gm daily, can increase to BID
- Bisacodyl suppository if no BM in 72 hrs



# Communication Skills

What They Say	What You Say
How bad is this?	From the information I have now, your loved one's situation is serious enough that your loved one should be in the hospital. <b>We will know more over the next day</b> , and we will update you.
Is my mother going to make it?	<b>I imagine you are scared.</b> Here's what I can say: because she is 70, and is already dealing with other medical problems <b>it is quite possible that she will not make it out of the hospital. Honestly, it is too soon to say for certain.</b>
Shouldn't she be in an intensive care unit?	You/your loved one's situation does not meet criteria for the ICU right now. We are supporting her with treatments (oxygen) to relieve her shortness of breath and we are closely monitoring her condition. <b>We will provide all the available treatment we have that will help her and we'll keep in touch with you by phone.</b>
What happens if she gets sicker?	If she gets sicker, we will continue to do our best to support her with oxygen and medicines for her breathing. If she gets worse despite those best treatments, she will be evaluating for her likelihood of benefiting from treatment with a ventilator. I can see that you really care about her.
How can you just take her off a ventilator when her life depends on it?	Unfortunately her condition has gotten worse, even though we are doing everything. She is dying now and the ventilator is not helping her to improve as we had hoped. This means that we need to take her off the ventilator to make sure she has a peaceful death and does not suffer. I wish things were different.
Resuscitation Status COVID-19	Example Language
Approach to when your clinical judgment is that a patient would not benefit from resuscitation	Given your overall condition, <b>I worry that if your heart or lungs stopped working, a breathing machine or CPR won't be able to help you live longer or improve your quality of life.</b> My recommendation is that if we get to that point, we use medications to focus on your comfort and allow you to die peacefully. This means we would not have you go to the ICU, be on a breathing machine, or use CPR. I imagine this may be hard to hear.
If in agreement:	These are really hard conversations. <b>I think this plan makes the most sense for you.</b>
If not in agreement:	These are really hard conversations. <b>We may need to talk about this again.</b>



## When/How to Call for Help

**North Memorial Palliative Care Team  
(763)581-4260 or page via amion**

- In addition to typical circumstances and consults, please consult us if:
- Symptoms refractory to initial efforts
  - Complex palliative care needs unresponsive to initial efforts
  - Pt or family emotional/psychosocial/spiritual distress



## Additional Resources

[www.capc.org/toolkits/covid-19-resp-on-se-res-ou-rces/](http://www.capc.org/toolkits/covid-19-resp-on-se-res-ou-rces/)

Download these apps (Google Play or App Store) for more palliative care resources:

VitalTalk Tips (Communication)

Fast Facts (Symptom Management)