

Textbook of Palliative Medicine

Welcome to palliative.tools' Textbook of Palliative Medicine. This under-construction wikibook seeks to be an accurate source of up-to-date information about the field of palliative medicine with a focus on the symptoms, investigations, treatment and prognosis of terminal illnesses and their complications as well as on symptom relief issues and pharmacology that is relevant to palliative medicine.

For a very concise summary of treatment guidelines for palliative care patients, see [A Pocketbook of Palliative Medicine](#)

This is a textbook that contains knowledge and perspective, but will not be useful for a deeper understanding of the art of palliative medicine, of communication and of the emotional and spiritual aspects of palliative care. For this aspect of palliative medicine, experience and respected colleagues will be of far more value.

Quick Links:

- [Continuous Subcutaneous Infusions](#) (and compatibilities)
- [Opioids](#) (including equivalence tables)
- [Prognostication](#) (including tools to help)

1. Introduction to Palliative Medicine

[Palliative Illness](#) (see chapter 2 below for details of different palliative illnesses).

[Prognostication](#)

[Communication](#) (see chapter 5 below for details of management including communication)

[Quality of Life and Symptom Control](#) (see chapters 3 to 5 for details on symptoms, signs, investigation and management).

[End of Life Care - Care in the Last Few Days of Life](#) (see chapter 6 for details on ethical and spiritual issues).

2. Conditions and Complications

2.1 Cancer

[Cancer](#)

Thoracic Malignancies

Lung Cancer

- [Small Cell Lung Cancer](#)
- [Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer](#)

[Mesothelioma](#) - [Pleural Mesothelioma](#)

Breast cancer

[Breast Cancer](#)

Gynaecological Malignancies

[Ovarian Cancer](#)

[Primary Peritoneal Cancer](#)

[Endometrial Cancer](#)

[Cervical Cancer](#)

Urological Malignancies

[Prostate Cancer](#)

[Transitional Cell Cancer](#) - [Bladder Cancer](#)

[Renal Cell Cancer](#)

Gastrointestinal Malignancies

[Colorectal cancer](#)

[Stomach Cancer](#)

[Oesophageal Cancer](#)

Hepatobiliary Malignancies

[Pancreas cancer](#)

[Cholangiocarcinoma](#)

[Hepatocellular Carcinoma](#)

Skin Malignancies

[Malignant Melanoma](#)

Primary CNS Tumours

[Gliomas - High-Grade Glioma](#)

Head and Neck Cancers

[Head and Neck Squamous Cell Cancer](#)

Haematological Malignancies

Lymphomas

- [Diffuse Large B Cell Lymphoma](#)
- [Follicular Lymphoma](#)

Leukaemias

- [Acute Myeloid Leukaemia](#)
- [Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia](#)

Plasma Cell Disorders

- [Multiple Myeloma](#)

CUP

[Cancer of Unknown Primary](#)

Other Cancers

[Sarcomas](#)

[Thyroid Cancer](#)

2.2 Metastases and Specific Complications of Cancer and Other Advancing Terminal Illnesses

Metastases and Mass Effects

[Brain metastases](#) and [Leptomeningeal metastases](#)

[Spinal cord compression](#)

[Bone metastases](#) and [Pathological fracture](#)

[Pleural Effusion](#) and [Pericardial Effusion](#)

[Pulmonary metastases](#), [Lymphangitis Carcinomatosa](#), [Bronchial Obstruction](#) and [Superior Vena Cava Obstruction](#)

[Ascites](#) and [Malignant bowel obstruction](#)

[Liver metastases](#) and [Biliary Tract Obstruction](#)

[Pelvic Metastases](#) and [Obstructive uropathy](#)

[Subcutaneous Metastases](#) and [Malignant Ulcers](#)

Bleeding and Clotting Complications of Cancer

- [Deep Vein Thrombosis](#) and [Pulmonary embolism](#)
- [Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation](#), [Paraneoplastic non-bacterial thrombotic endocarditis](#)
- [Thrombocytopenia](#)
- [Haematuria](#), [Gastrointestinal Haemorrhage](#), [Haemoptysis](#)

Biochemical Complications of Cancer

- [Hypercalcaemia of Malignancy](#)
- [Syndrome of Inappropriate Anti-Diuretic Hormone Secretion](#)

Neurological Complications of Cancer

- [Seizures](#)
- [Paraneoplastic Encephalitis](#)

Other paraneoplastic syndromes (also see the conditions noted above)

- [Tumour-related fever](#)
- [Paraneoplastic leukaemoid reaction](#)

Other Complications in Advanced Terminal Illnesses

- [Lymphoedema](#)
- [Arrhythmias](#) and [Atrial Fibrillation](#)
- [Fistulae](#)
- [Leukostasis](#)

2.3 Organ Failure

Heart Failure

[Cardiac Failure](#)

Liver Failure

[Cirrhosis](#)

- [Ascites and Paracentesis](#)
- [Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis](#)
- [Hepatic encephalopathy](#)
- [Hepatorenal syndrome](#)

Renal failure

[Chronic Kidney Disease](#)

[Acute Renal Failure](#)

Respiratory Failure

[Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](#)

Degenerative Neurological Conditions

[Motor Neurone Disease](#)

[Dementia](#)

[Parkinson's Disease](#)

Multi-Organ Failure

[Multi-Organ Failure](#)

2.4 Miscellaneous Conditions

Microbiology and Infectious Diseases

Sepsis

- Gram Negative Rod Septicaemia
- Gram Positive Coccus Septicaemia

Pneumonia

Urinary Tract Infections

Neurological Conditions

Stroke and Intracranial Haemorrhage

Surgical Conditions

Peripheral Vascular Disease and Gangrene

Serious complications of medical treatments / iatrogenic problems

Opioid toxicity

Pneumothorax post-pleural drainage

Haemorrhage secondary to anti-coagulation

Subcutaneous-line associated abscess

Cancer treatment complications occasionally seen in palliative care patients:

- Febrile neutropaenia
- Radiation oesophagitis
- Immune therapy complications

3. Symptoms and Signs

3.1 Symptoms

- Pain
- Constitutional symptoms
 - Fatigue
 - Anorexia, Weight Loss and Cachexia-Anorexia of Cancer
 - Sarcopaenia
- Peripheral oedema and Facial oedema
- Respiratory symptoms
 - Dyspnoea

- Cough
- Haemoptysis
- Hiccups
- Airway Obstruction
- Respiratory secretions
- Gastrointestinal symptoms
 - Constipation
 - Diarrhoea
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Dysphagia
 - Heart burn
 - Faecal incontinence
 - Tenesmus
- Neurological, psychological and psychiatric symptoms
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Hallucinations, agitation and delirium
 - Movement disorders - tremors, jerks
 - Falls, dizziness and unconscious collapse
 - Memory loss
 - Seizures
- Other symptoms
 - Pruritus
 - Muscle spasm
 - Urinary incontinence
 - Sweats

3.2 Signs

- General signs

1. Cachexia
2. Tachycardia
3. Hypotension

- Hand signs

1. Peripheral cyanosis
2. Flapping tremor

- Facial signs

1. Jaundice
2. Pemberton's sign

- Chest signs

1. +Pleural effusion

- Abdominal signs

1. Abdominal distension

- Leg signs

1. Peripheral oedema

4. Investigations and diagnosis

4.1 Imaging

Plain films

[Chest x-ray](#)

[Abdominal x-ray](#)

[Spine x-ray](#)

Ultrasound

[Diagnostic ultrasound](#)

[Point of care ultrasound](#)

Computer tomography

[CT](#)

Magnetic resonance

[MRI](#)

Nuclear imaging

[Nuclear imaging](#)

Other imaging

[Positron emission tomography](#)

[Cardiac imaging](#)

4.2 Blood tests

Haematology

Full blood count

- [Anaemia](#)
- [Thrombocytopaenia](#)
- [Neutropaenia](#)
- [Leucocytosis](#)

Coagulation studies

- [INR](#)

Biochemistry

- Sodium - [Hyponatraemia](#)
- Potassium [Hypokalaemia](#) and [Hyperkalaemia](#)
- Calcium - [Hypercalcaemia](#) and [Hypocalcaemia](#)
- Renal function - [Urea](#) and [Creatinine](#)
- Liver enzymes - [AST](#), [ALT](#), [GGT](#) and [ALP](#)
- Bilirubin - [Jaundice](#)
- [Albumin](#)
- Inflammatory markers - [CRP](#)
- Cell turnover markers - [LDH](#)
- Other biochemistry tests - [Urate](#), [Phosphate](#), [Bicarbonate](#)

Miscellaneous blood tests

- Tumour markers - [PSA](#), [Ca-125](#), [AFP](#)

4.3 Pathology tests

[Cytology](#) and [FNA](#)

[Histology](#) and [Biopsy](#)

[Autopsy](#)

4.4 Miscellaneous tests

[Gram stain](#) and [Culture](#)

[Urine analysis](#)

[Pulmonary function tests](#)

[Electrocardiography](#)

5. Pharmacology, Procedures and Communication

5.1 Principles of Pharmacology

[Pharmacokinetics](#)

[Pharmacodynamics](#)

[Pharmacogenetics](#)

[Drug interactions](#)

[Adverse drug reactions](#)

[Routes of administration](#)

- [Subcutaneous medications](#)
- [Continuous subcutaneous infusions](#)
- [Subcutaneous patient controlled analgesia](#)

5.2 Medication Index

Analgesia

Opioids

- [Morphine, diamorphine, codeine](#)
- [Oxycodone](#)
- [Hydromorphone](#)
- [Fentanyl, sufentanyl, alfentanil, remifentanyl](#)
- [Methadone](#)
- [Tapentadol](#)
- [Tramadol](#)
- [Buprenorphine](#)

NSAIDs

Co-analgesics

- [Gabapentin, pregabalin](#)
- [Valproate, carbamazepine](#)

Miscellaneous analgesics

- [Ketamine](#)
- [Lignocaine](#)

Nausea drugs

[Anti-emetics](#)

Steroids

[Steroids](#)

- [Dexamethasone](#)

Anti-convulsants

[Anti-convulsants](#)

Medications for diarrhoea and constipation

[Laxatives](#)

[Anti-diarrhoeal agents](#)

Psychiatric Drugs

[Anxiolytics](#) and [Benzodiazepines](#)

[Anti-psychotics](#)

[Anti-depressants](#)

Drugs for infections

[Antibiotics](#)

Drugs for heart and respiratory conditions

[Bronchodilators](#)

Heart failure medications

- [Frusemide](#) and [bumetanide](#)
- [Nitrates](#)
- [Digoxin](#)

5.3 Communication

- Breaking bad news - Discussing resuscitation and escalation of treatment

5.4 Procedures and other treatments

- Procedures performed by palliative care physicians

1. Ascitic tap
2. Pleural tap
3. Acupuncture
4. Subcutaneous fluid drainage

- Procedures performed by palliative care nurses and allied health staff

1. Wound dressings
2. Subcutaneous line insertion
3. Manual lymphatic drainage

- Allied health

1. Physiotherapy and Mobility devices
2. Occupational therapy
3. Speech pathology and Communication devices

- Chemotherapy - Radiotherapy - Gastrointestinal endoscopic procedures

1. Peg and Venting gastrostomy
2. Endoscopic stent

- Bronchoscopic procedures

1. Bronchial stent

- Pain Specialist procedures

1. Nerve blocks
 1. Coeliac plexus block and Splanchnic block
 2. Intrathecal analgesia
 3. +Cordotomy

- Interventional radiology

1. PICC line
2. IVC filter
3. RIG
4. [Vertebroplasty](#)

- Surgical and orthopaedic procedures

1. Prophylactic pin and Pathological fracture

2. Tracheostomy

- Other interventions

1. Pericardiocentesis

6. Ethics, Philosophy, Culture and Spirituality

6.1 Religion

Religious world-views and their impacts in the medical care of the dying =====

Pentecostal Christianity, the Prosperity Gospel and Faith Healing

Jehovah's Witnesses and Blood Transfusion

6.2 Culture

Cultural world-views and issues in palliative care

6.3 Ethics

Ethical issues in palliative care

- Euthanasia, Physician Assisted Suicide and Continuous Deep Sedation - Withdrawal of Life-Supportive Treatment - Relief of Suffering and Potential Hastening of Death - Family discord in palliative care

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Last update: **2019/07/10 13:19**

