Honoring Choices® NORTH DAKOTA

Special Edition

INCORPORATING PATTERNS INTO PRACTICE

Advance care planning (ACP) is a complex process that provides patients and their families with the opportunity to learn more about the types of medical decisions that may arise in the event of a medical emergency or at the end-of-life. As healthcare professionals, we strive to educate our patients about ACP to empower them and ensure they are able to make informed decisions about their healthcare. Depending on the patient's clinical status and medical diagnoses, some may ask how much time they have left and what their quality of life may look like. These are very challenging questions to answer.

In 1990, researchers at the Institute of Medicine developed the conceptual framework of various death trajectories. Though they are not definitive, the trajectories allow healthcare providers predict patterns of rate of change (e.g., cognitive, social well-being), thus guiding interventions and/or services that a patient and their family may need at the end-of life. The trajectories of dying also allow providers to identify and anticipate any challenges that may arise in the future. As National Healthcare Decisions Day approaches, we encourage you to review the trajectories of dying to individualize and optimize the ACP conversations you may have with your patients. Remember, ACP - it's about the conversation.

April 16th

NHDD

Make your healthcare decisions known

References:

Ballentine, J. M. (2018). The five trajectories: Supporting patients during serious illness. https://csupalliativecare.org/wp-content/uploads/Five-Trajectories-eBook-02.21.2018.pdf

Cohen-Mansfield, J., Skornick-Bouchbinder, M., & Brill, S. (2018). Trajectories of end of life: A systematic review. The Gerontological Society of America, 73(4), 564-572. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbx093

THE FIVE TRAJECTORIES OF
DYING

Sudden Death Trajectory

Sudden Death

High — Function — Low
Death
Time
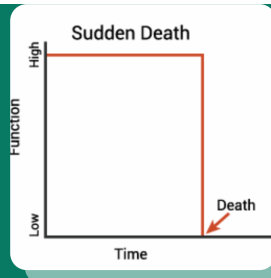
Occurs when a person progresses quickly from normal functioning to death

Examples: cardiac arrest, stroke, suicide, fatal motor vehicle accident, a fall followed by a brain bleed
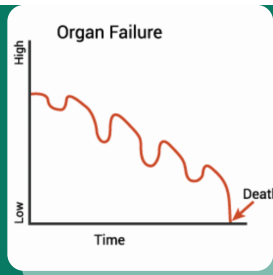

Accounts for 20-30% of all deaths

Provides time for patients and their family to prepare mentally, emotionally, physically, and financially, for end of life

Most common example is cancer

Terminal Illness

High — Function — Low
Death
Time
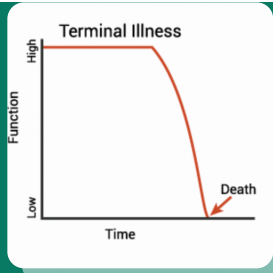
Terminal Illness Trajectory

Major Organ Failure Trajectory

Organ Failure

High — Low
Death
Time

Encompasses chronic and progressive diseases of the heart, liver, kidney, and some neurological diseases

Characterized by progressive decline in health with intermittent exacerbations

Drastic decline in the last 3 months of life

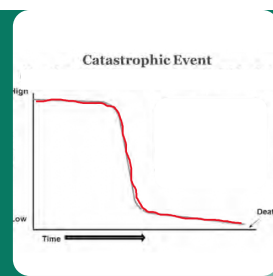Characterized by slow progression & decline in health

This is the oldest age group, by which 66% die at the age of 80 years or older

Examples : Alzheimer's and other dementias, Parkinson's, and multiple sclerosis

Frailty

High — Low
Death
Time

The Frailty Trajectory

Catastrophic Event Trajectory

Catastrophic Event

High — Low
Death
Time

Combination of Sudden Death and Frailty Trajectories

Occurs when an individual survives a catastrophic injury and is permanently debility, which may lead to long-term, life-sustaining treatments

Examples: Hip fracture in elderly, stroke, & COVID-19

https://www.honoringchoicesnd.org/