COVID-19: Death at the Door

March 31, 2020 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

My last Hep blog was eight months ago. At that time, I wanted to write about topics other than hepatitis C and liver disease. Never would I have imagined that I'd be writing about COVID-19 and this tragic pandemic, but here I am.

COVID-19 is a universal concern. People with compromised health issues may have additional anxieties surrounding coronavirus. Research about liver disease and COVID-19 is a constantly changing landscape, and one that I am not going to wander into today beyond this: Take the health advisories seriously and stay at home.

The coronavirus pandemic is speeding up so fast that I can't keep up with the statistics, which is why I am not going to try to pin them down here. Rather than numbers, I want to mention images. Circulating in the media are pictures of dead bodies piling up, most recently in New York. The grim reality of COVID-19 is closing in everywhere.

Last week, my husband and I discussed our end-of-life wishes with our family. We have maintained our advance health care directives for many years, but these are different times. Shortages of ventilators and other medical equipment beckon us to examine our values. In normal times, we would consider being attached to a ventilator if the disease was acute and the prognosis was good. With COVID-19, we prefer giving the ventilator to a younger person. We have also instructed our health care proxies about our wishes not to be resuscitated. You can read more about this in my blog at LucindaPorterRN.com.

Saying goodbye

COVID-19 is forcing other conversations in to our house. When a person is hospitalized, they are separated from their loved ones. People are robbed of some of the common ways to say their good-byes. I have written notes to all of my family members, telling them how much I love and appreciate them. I try to say this in person too.

If a loved one is sick and isolated, ask a health care worker if they will relay a message. Yes, health care staff are overworked, but some are happy to do this. Try to visualize being with your loved ones, saying and doing all the things you might otherwise have done under different circumstances.

Funerals and celebrations of life

Gatherings for funerals and celebrations of life aren't possible now, so some are postponing them.

Others are having small, private services. Last weekend, a friend participated in a celebration of life event via video conferencing. Although these alternatives aren't ideal, people need ways to grieve. If someone you know has lost a loved one during this time, be sure to give them extra attention.

A few final words…

I am typically an optimistic, upbeat person, and try to end my blogs on a high note. However, these are tragic times, and it seems irresponsible to pretend that this is anything other than a catastrophe. Nevertheless, love and helping others still prevail, and I am grateful that even in a pandemic with death looming over me, I have moments of joy and peace.

I hope you find moments of joy, love, beauty, peace and gratitude in your day. I'd love to hear from you. Stay well; stay home.

Click here to learn more about advance directives and end-of-life issues.

If you want to read more about COVID-19 or other health-related issues, I am also blogging at LucindaPorterRN.com.

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