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HOSPICE

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The New Normal: Realities of a COVID-19 World

The highly contagious novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 has significantly — possibly forever — changed our day-to-day lives. Many of us grieve the loss of:

- Social connections
- Family structures
- Routines and home life
- A sense of security
- Trust in our social systems
- The lives of loved ones and community members
- Jobs, a stable source of income and food
- Activities we once enjoyed

Mental Health Concerns

Researchers have warned about the toll loneliness can take on mental and physical health. Isolation can lead to depression, confusion, unhappiness, and functional decline. What is particularly tough is the uncertainty about when we can see loved ones in person again.

The COVID-19 pandemic is especially devastating for older adults. They may feel intense social isolation, even within a home-based routine. Important personal interactions, such as home health visits to set up medications or assist with a bath, may be cut back.

People with memory disorders, such as Alzheimer's and dementia, and their caregivers face extra hardships. The person may forget to wash their hands or take other safety measures. COVID-19 may also worsen their reasoning abilities.

COVID-19 and the Seriously Ill

Those who are less likely to recover from a severe case of COVID-19 are mostly the elderly and people with existing



medical problems. After a long hospital stay, some COVID-19 survivors may not regain enough strength to return home. Some may need rehabilitation. Tragically, some will not survive.

Some patients may be put on life support with a ventilator (breathing machine) for weeks. Though ventilators save many lives, certain patients may not benefit from them. Some may even be harmed.

People of advanced age or with serious underlying illness might consider whether they want to go to the hospital if they become seriously ill with coronavirus. Some people may prefer to stay at home with care from family and hospice or palliative care services.

The home health workforce is essential in addressing this pandemic — from helping people safely stay in their homes to helping others transition out of the hospital.

More than ever, it is important that we all do what we can to stay healthy and to protect others. Visit www.cdc.gov to read about updated safety guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Final Goodbyes While Social Distancing

During the pandemic, it has become more difficult to say a final goodbye to very seriously ill patients in isolation. Families want to be at the bedside to make sure their loved one is okay, to comfort and reassure them, to say the important things they need to say.

But those impacted by COVID-19 cannot be with their loved ones in the hospital. The chance of spreading the virus is too high. They can still be there — but from a distance.

Healthcare workers are often the only people present with the dying. Already under enormous strain, these dedicated staff stand in for the spouses, children, and friends who cannot be there in person.

Staff use their phones and devices to bring families “into the room.” Technology, video, and music have become increasingly important tools during this tragic time.

Role of the Healthcare Chaplain

Across the country, clergy of all faiths are struggling to do some of the most challenging and personal parts of their job in this time of new restrictions on in-person gatherings: ministering to the sick, the dying, and the bereaved.

Doctors and nurses focus on healing physical ailments; chaplains are there to help people who are suffering spiritually.

Healthcare chaplains are specially trained to support seriously ill patients of all backgrounds and their families. They set their own beliefs aside and listen without judgment.

The chaplain is there to give you the support you need, no matter what beliefs you may hold. Chaplains comfort the grief and fear of patients and their families.

Many chaplains now do much of their work by phone. One healthcare chaplain recently administered last rites — one of life’s most sacred and difficult moments — via FaceTime. Some chaplains still visit in person. But now they must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) as they sit beside people who are at the end of life.

Funeral Planning from Afar

How America mourns those who have died has also changed in the COVID-19 era. Strict physical distancing guidelines are forcing people to find new ways to grieve.

We can no longer assume that our loved ones will die in their homes surrounded by family and friends, and that they can be honored with well-attended memorials.

Planning a funeral or deciding whether to attend one during the pandemic can be a difficult choice for survivors. Many funeral homes are arranging outdoor graveside services only, which are private for immediate family.

This has launched a new service: the “Viewneral,” an interactive and collaborative virtual funeral. Up to 500 family members and friends can participate from the safety of their own homes via technology powered by Zoom using a link to the end-of-life event. The service is recorded for future viewing.

Without such efforts, a lack of closure could delay emotional healing, mental health experts warn, while prolonged self-isolation might cause depression. Virtual memorials and other technologies offer us a new way to say goodbye and grieve together.



Some people mistakenly think hospice care is just about dying...nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice helps patients and families focus on living. Angels Grace Hospice, LLC, brings comfort, dignity and peace to help people with a life-limiting illness live every moment of life to the fullest. We also provide support for family and friends.

We are licensed in the state of Illinois, Medicare Certified, Joint Commission Accredited and are locally owned and operated by experienced professionals dedicated to providing excellent end-of-life care for Will, Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Grundy, and Kane counties. Please contact us for more information.

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To comfort always... this is our work

