

PALLIATIVE CARE TIPS

Issue # 30 How to Arrange Therapeutic Paracentesis for Palliative Care Patients in the Community and Hospice

(Collect them all)

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Philosophy:

Therapeutic paracentesis is a procedure to relieve symptoms (e.g. intolerable distention, pain, dyspnea) due to ascites when other therapeutic options (e.g. chemotherapy, diuretics) are no longer effective or cannot be implemented in a timely manner.

Who Performs the Procedure:

The family physician will determine when a therapeutic paracentesis is indicated. The palliative care consultant may assist in identifying the need for this procedure upon request.

- When the person is able to be transported, the procedure may be completed in an outpatient clinic or radiological department at an acute care/community hospital. Transportation will need to be individually arranged. For patients at home, there may be a cost for ambulance transportation, for which the patient/family will be responsible. For patients in hospice, the hospice will coordinate transportation.
- If the patient is unable to travel to an outpatient setting for subsequent paracentesis, the family/attending physician may perform the paracentesis when it is considered medically safe to perform the procedure without ultrasound guidance.
- In the hospice setting, the procedure is performed by the family physician or in the nearest outpatient clinic or radiological department.
- In the home setting, the procedure may be performed by the family physician. Home Care nurses do provide postparacentesis monitoring; however, Home Care nurses do not assist with the procedure in the community. Equipment to be obtained and disposed of by the family physician.

Booking an outpatient therapeutic paracentesis:

- If the patient is being followed at the Cross Cancer Institute (780-432-8771), contact the patient's oncologist, who will book the ultrasound mark-up. The procedure will be performed by the oncologist, clinical associate, or nurse practitioner.
- At the Grey Nuns Community Hospital, if the physician has admitting privileges, call Radiology (780-735-7452) and an ultrasound-guided paracentesis procedure is booked if the radiologist approves. The patient goes to Day Medical for preparation. If the physician does not have admitting privileges, call the switchboard (780-735-7000) for the Internal Medicine specialist on-call. Or, if the patient is previously known or followed by a surgeon at GNH, the surgeon can be called.
- At the Sturgeon Community Hospital, if the physician has admitting privileges, call the outpatient clinic (780-418-8235) to make a booking. If the physician does not have privileges, call the switchboard (780-418-8200) and ask for the Internal Medicine specialist on-call. (If markings are necessary, the Ultrasound Department can be involved for marking, but the procedure will not be performed in the Ultrasound Department.)
- At the Royal Alexandra Hospital, call the Ultrasound Department (780-735-4310) and ask for an "Outpatient Procedure Request Form" to be provided by fax. Return the completed form by fax (780-735-5414), and if the radiologist agrees to perform the procedure, a booking will be made. The Outpatient Department at RAH does not accommodate physicians who would like to perform the procedure themselves.
- At the Misericordia Community Hospital, if the physician has admitting privileges and is performing the procedure him/herself, call the booking office (780-735-2768) and the procedure is done on the Medical Day Unit. If the physician is not performing the procedure, call the Ultrasound Department (780-735-2540) for a radiologist to perform the procedure. The Ultrasound Department could provide by fax an Interventional Form, which contains what information the department needs.
- At the University of Alberta Hospital, call the Ultrasound Department (780-407-8843) and an ultrasound-guided paracentesis is booked if approved by the radiologist.

REMEMBER: For referrals, questions, or telephone consultations, call 780-496-1300 weekdays and weekends. Palliative Care Tips are now available on our website www.palliative.org