ICU Liberation Bundle – Element F

Family Engagement and Empowerment.

Introduction

The "F" in the ICU Liberation Bundle stands for Family Engagement and Empowerment. It encourages family presence in Critical Care (CC) and supports strategies to involve and empower them to become active contributors in individualized patient care. Including families in care can improve safety and quality, while helping reduce patient anxiety, confusion, and agitation. Whenever possible, prioritize engaging both patients and their families.

Family means anyone the patient considers important in their life.

Exemplary patient and family centered care is demonstrated when we:

- Ensure patients and families feel informed and supported across their trajectory.
- Build a shared understanding of each patient's experience of illness, their cultural values, and personal goals and preferences – this should be two-way information sharing.
- Encourage active participation in care decisions and self-management.
- Encourage a therapeutic environment prioritizing both physical comfort and emotional well-being for patients and their loved ones.

Assessment

Assessment consists of inviting the family into the unit and engaging them to provide a holistic assessment of the patient. Include the patient whenever possible.

- Identify key family members, which may include individuals who are not formally related.
- Identify key decision-makers and a substitute decision maker, if appropriate.
- Assess family resources and identify potential support needs with them.
- Identify the patient's personal and cultural beliefs and other key information to support the CC team in best understanding the patient.
- If the patient is unable to speak for themself, engage the family in identifying patient preferences and routines such as favorite physical activities, music, digital entertainment, favorite physical activities, typical sleep/wake cycles, etc.

Interventions

Interventions should be individualized to patient/family preferences, whenever possible. Family engagement can be promoted through:

- Patient communication support tools – whiteboards, letterboards, tablets, ICU diaries, Speech Language Pathologist consultation.
- Flexible visitation and virtual access when in-person visitation is not possible.
- Referral to Family Caregivers of BC, for free, virtual and/or in-person support across BC.
- Resources to help family navigate ICU terminology, common interventions, and the recovery process.
- Involvement of patient and family in interdisciplinary rounds – include preparation support for them and staff/providers involved.
- Proactive and responsive meetings with family guided by a structured communication tool
- Review the Recovery after Critical Care Guide for patients and families (poster).

Additional tools:

ICU Liberation A-F Bundle Overview Videos – Click on Element F on the left-hand side	ICU Liberation A-F Bundle Overview (sccm.org)
Get To Know Me page – as an example from University of Washington	Copy of Get to Know Me form
Appendix A – Structured Communication tool - VALUE mnemonic from University of Washington	Summary of V.A.L.U.E. mnemonic
Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults BC (CAYABC). This Canadian organization offers augmentative/alternative communication tools and e-modules	https://cayabc.net/

Recommendations

- Ensure a means to communicate patient preferences and goals to the care team.
- Ensure interdisciplinary involvement in all stages of an intervention and include patient and family partners whenever possible.
- Discuss patient and family suggestions and concerns during daily interdisciplinary rounds; include them in discussion, whenever possible.
- Support cultural safety and humility by identifying and integrating patients' and families' cultural or spiritual practices into care.
- Advocate for Patient and/or Family Partner involvement on Quality Committees.
- Review patient survey feedback to help choose appropriate interventions the unit can realistically support with resources.

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