

SPRINT Implementation Collaborative™

Be Prepared Conversation Guides Backgrounder

The “Be Prepared: Palliative Care Emergencies in the Home” Conversation Guides, developed by the Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA) and the Montreal Institute of Palliative Care, are designed to assist nurses in managing palliative care emergencies such as dyspnea (breathing), hypercalcemia (balance), massive hemorrhage (bleeding), seizures (brain), spinal cord compression (bones), and superior vena cava obstruction (blockage) in a home setting.

Why were the guides developed?

These guides address the need for improved preparedness in handling palliative care emergencies at home. Discussing and being prepared for these potential emergencies is crucial as it significantly impacts the quality of life of patients and eases the distress of caregivers. By using the term “emergency,” the guides underscore the urgency and seriousness of these situations, prompting immediate and appropriate responses.

What approach was used for the content?

The guides employ a “Head-Heart-Hands” approach, presenting complex medical information in an accessible manner to both healthcare providers, and patients and their caregivers. The content is tailored to different audiences, with professional-level information for nurses (reading grade 9.5 Flesh-Kincaid Grade scoring) and simpler explanations for patients and caregivers (reading grade 5.3 on the Flesh-Kincaid grade scoring). The use of simple memory keys for identifying different types of emergencies (like “Breathing” for dyspnea, “Balance” for hypercalcemia, etc.) is designed for quick recall and application in real-world scenarios.

What is in the Guides?

The guides include:

- A Conversation Checklist for nurses with step-by-step actions for facilitating difficult conversations.
- Detailed information on each palliative care emergency including the condition's underlying mechanisms, prominent signs and symptoms, and associated risk factors, and treatment options. This content is supported by tailored conversation pointers for engaging both patients and caregivers.
- A Tool for Patients and Caregivers, offering practical advice for managing emergencies at home and a straightforward overview of the condition, symptoms, and guidelines on when to contact their healthcare team.

Can Non-Regulated Providers use the Conversation Guides?

Yes, Personal Support Workers can use the guides for non-medical support and basic first-aid. The guides' final sections are especially helpful, providing information on comfort measures and emergency protocols.

How are the Guides accessed?

The guides are available as downloadable PDFs, customizable with organizational logos for patient information purposes, making them a flexible resource for healthcare providers and caregivers.

About the eiCOMPASS Project and the CHCA

The ‘Be Prepared’ guides are a part of the eiCOMPASS Project, an initiative by the CHCA to develop emotionally intuitive, competency-based palliative care skills for home care providers. The CHCA, a national, non-profit organization, advocates for high-quality home care services and promotes innovations and improvements in home care delivery. This initiative aligns with CHCA's mission to ensure accessible, responsive home care solutions for all Canadians. [CHCA Website](#) / [X](#) / [LinkedIn](#)