



COVID-19 UPDATE

15 January 2021

PROVIDING PATIENT UPDATES TO FAMILIES

While it is understood that the staff in the hospitals are extremely stretched due to the Covid-19 pandemic – it is essential at this time that the families/loved ones of patients are kept informed regarding the progress of the patients in hospital. It is extremely stressful for a family who is unable to visit or have direct contact with the patients to not have an indication of the status of their loved one.

Each hospital should have a **clear and coordinated communication strategy with families**, taking into account their unique circumstances. The guidelines below can be used in formulation of such:

- Provide scheduled updates to the next-of-kin of those patients who cannot do so themselves (e.g. daily after doctors' rounds or when needed and possible), by a dedicated person e.g. unit manager, doctor or allocated nurse practitioner.
- Doctors should keep family updated where patients are sedated or ventilated and cannot keep in touch with their families themselves.
- The digital patient dashboard has a facility to send an SMS to the identified next-of-kin, using standard messages or free text.
- Urge the next-of-kin to inform family and friends of the patient's condition (to limit calls to the hospital).
- Refer family and friends to the specific next-of-kin when they're phoning the hospital for updates (when patients cannot take the calls themselves).
- Use staff, e.g. Patient Experience- or Doctor Relationship Managers or capable volunteers who can connect conscious and orientated patients with their families using mobile devices, and facilitate such calls.
- Support patients to connect to the Mediclinic Wi-Fi and to keep their devices charged.
- Ensure the safe keeping and labelling (with patient's name) of patient's devices and chargers to encourage them to bring devices to the hospital.
- Consider a variety of communication methods, e.g. telephone or WhatsApp calls, video calls and recordings, with consent of the patient and/or family and while adhering to IPC principles.
- Encourage and use staff ideas to support effective updating of families.

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