



Dear SCOC family,

I am writing to you as the Medical Director/Physician caring for your loved one.

Conversations about the wishes for our loved ones in the face of an incurable illness such as COVID-19 are very challenging. I believe that being prepared to think about goals of care before a situation becomes critical can provide peace-of-mind to individuals and families, knowing that their wishes will be followed. I wanted to share with you some information to help you think about your goals of care for COVID-19.

At this time there is no curative treatment for COVID-19, but we can treat symptoms for comfort. You may have heard of some types of medications that may be effective to treat COVID-19, but there is very little information and no large studies have been done to determine if they are effective or even safe. For those that develop severe symptoms, we can provide oxygen, medications, and sometimes intravenous or subcutaneous fluids. While fluids may provide some comfort in certain circumstances, they can sometimes make symptoms worse, so this is a discussion we would need to have if that time comes. If you or your loved one continues to have worsening symptoms and requires more oxygen than is possible through the nasal prongs we use, the next treatment option is having a breathing tube inserted and being placed on a ventilator (life support). This can only take place in an intensive care unit at a hospital.

Emerging information on COVID-19 suggests that older frail adults and those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, COPD, high blood pressure, cancer or dementia are at increased risk of serious illness and death. While the average death rate from COVID-19 is between 2% and 4%, the death rate among older patients (age 80 or older) is much higher and estimated at 15%.ⁱ Once a person with COVID-19 requires a breathing tube and life support, the mortality is over 80% and in a recent study as high as 97%.ⁱⁱ

Intensive care and artificial life support is a very unpleasant experience that causes suffering and can result in serious, long-term medical problems and significantly reduced levels of independence. For older adults with underlying health conditions there is a small chance of surviving if life support is required, and a high risk of long-term complications if one does survive.

With each medical treatment that is offered, the risks and benefits of those treatments must be weighed carefully and should be considered in terms of what living well means to each person individually. Some people believe that they will receive better care in a hospital, but we can provide excellent care within our homes in a comfortable and familiar environment. We will work with you to ensure that we do everything we can to meet your goals of care. Please take the time to discuss your wishes with your family and ensure that your care team, including myself are aware of your decisions. I know this is a difficult conversation to have, and the team is here to support you. We want to be certain that everybody understands their options and makes informed decisions.

Please see attached video (can copy and paste link into your browser).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i16ZDM3ZnZA&feature=youtu.be>

Sincerely,

Dr. Abo Akintan MD
Medical director SCOC
April 3, 2020

2701 St. Clair Ave East, East York, ON M4B 1M5 Tel: 416-757-8757 Fax: 416-751-7315

Email: info@scoc.ca

ⁱ JAMA Feb 2020

ⁱⁱ Lancet Feb 2020, Mar 2020