

CARING FOR MUSLIM PATIENTS

Faith Sensitive End of Life Care
Guidance for Healthcare Professionals

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Introduction

Delivering high-quality care to patients of Muslim faith (Islam) requires healthcare professionals to have basic knowledge of the differences in cultural and spiritual values.

Muslim patients represent a substantial portion of the society in Leicester and Leicestershire. The Muslim faith encompasses many ethnicities with diverse views regarding illness and healthcare.

This guidance aims to describe practices healthcare professionals should be made aware of, to provide faith and culturally sensitive end of life care to Muslim patients and their families. When providing care to Muslim patients, it is important to understand the impact the Islamic faith has on the provision of healthcare.

When the cultures of Muslims around the world are compared, there are common features found in all countries, and the variations represent the basic features of the Muslim religious tenets. However, Muslims are not a homogeneous group, and different groups may have varying cultures and needs even though they share the same religious practices. We often find that behaviours are shaped by cultural practices that are not always in concordance with basic religious practices.

Health care professionals should avoid making assumptions about the needs of Muslim patients or their families. The best practice is to seek guidance from the family members themselves or failing that, the hospital chaplaincy department or the Muslim Chaplain directly. You may also contact Crescent Funerals using the contact details found on page 8.

End of Life in Islam

The preservation of life is considered paramount in Islam. However, Islam also recognises that death is an inevitable part of human existence and is predestined by Allah (God). Muslims will often accept an onset of illness and subsequent death of their loved one. In medically-futile situations where life support equipment is used to prolong organ functions, the condition of the patient needs to be carefully explained to the family and what this will mean going forward. Medical professionals should also ensure that the family fully understand any 'do not resuscitate' orders that may have been put in place.

If death appears imminent, a Muslim patient's family may wish to perform certain religious practices that are customary for an individual approaching death. These rituals performed at the death bed are not generally elaborate or complicated. The most basic will be for family members to be permitted access and be allowed to be seated near the bed of the patient. This is so that they are able to read verses from the Qur'an softly for their loved one, praying for the peaceful departure of the soul.

If the patient's family is not present, healthcare providers should do their best to ensure, they are able to communicate with the next of kin, or try to organise a Muslim representative from the hospital. You can contact the hospital chaplaincy to seek advice or contact the Muslim Chaplain directly in such circumstances.

Items of Religious Significance

Quran - Is the Holy book in Islam. Muslims believe the Quran to be revelation from Allah (God).

Zam Zam water - The Zam Zam well is located within the blessed Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, east of the Kaaba, the holiest place in Islam.

In Islam, Zam Zam is a miraculous source of water. Millions of pilgrims visit the well each year while performing the Hajj or Umrah (pilgrimage) in order to drink its water. Most Muslims will possess a small quantity of Zam Zam. One can drink Zam Zam water in its pure form, or diluted in tap water. Family members will often give their loved ones Zam Zam to aid recovery or bring them comfort during their last stages.

Tasbeih - Islamic prayer beads, which are used by Muslims as a means for counting a prayer or supplication, which may be repeated for a prescribed number of times.

Preferences Proceeding Death

In the Muslim faith, a person on whom the signs of death are clearly visible is called a 'muhtadar'. If such signs are apparent, it is preferred practice (Sunnah) to let that person lie on their RIGHT side facing the direction of Mecca, (Qiblah).

It is preferred that the bed of the patient be turned so that the patient is able to face towards the direction of Qiblah. The direction can be acquired by contacting the Muslim Chaplain. There are also apps available that will show the Qiblah direction. It is also appropriate for the patient to be positioned to lie on their back with their feet towards the Qiblah, and the head slightly raised with a cushion so that they are able to face the Qiblah. It is also important to ensure any bed linen is clean and not soiled.

Please note. The treatment and comfort of the patient is always priority, therefore if moving the bed is difficult due to space or the presence of medical equipment, then this should be avoided.

For Muslim's who may be present during this time it is advised that they recite verses or chapters from the Quran to ease the moment of death. These verses or chapters are often referred to as "Surah". The prescribed Surah's for such occasions are; Surah Yasin (No: 36), Surah Ar Ra'd (No: 13) and Surah Baqarah (No: 2).

To find the numbers of these Surah in the Quran cubes, please consult the manual, which accompanies the cube. Surah Yasin for example, which is most commonly recited, is often number 36 on most Quran cubes.

Practicalities Immediately After Death

If possible, healthcare professionals should handle the body of a deceased Muslim as little as possible. Muslims believe that the soul remains close to the body and maintains a connection for a period (until burial), therefore, the body feels discomfort with any pressure that may be applied after death.

Intravenous lines, such as cannulas, as well as drains and catheters, may be present in the deceased. Although they can present a risk to people handling the deceased, their removal can result in leakage of body fluids from the puncture site. If there is a risk of leakage of body fluids from removal, then lines may have been left in situ, although these should be clamped and cut close to the skin.

There are usually local policies for dealing with this for non-post-mortem cases.

As soon death occurs, the following advice should be followed. Assistance from any family members present can be requested.

1. The eyes should be closed by applying gentle downward pressure on the eye lids.
2. Remove any dentures and close the mouth, This can be done by applying gently upward pressure on the chin while holding the top of the head. If needed, tie a length of cotton bandage under the chin and around the head to keep the mouth closed.
3. Remove any jewellery such as rings, necklaces, bracelets and nose studs. (It is especially important to remove rings before swelling occurs).
4. Straighten the limbs carefully and gently. If they will not straighten do not force them.
5. Place the feet together and if necessary, bind at the ankles.
6. The body should be covered from head to toe with a clean sheet and should remain covered throughout.

Certification & Body Release

Muslims require swift burials therefore senior nursing staff should try to ensure that the necessary documentation, such as the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), is issued as quickly as possible.

During normal working hour's the MCCD will be issued through the hospital's Bereavement Services office however in an out of hours setting, senior ward staff and family members will need to contact and work with the hospital Duty Manager. If collection is to be made out of normal working hours, then arrangements can only be made through the hospital Duty Manager.

Ward staff should also notify the hospital porters to move the body as soon as possible, as any delay in this may delay release and possibly the burial itself.

Essential Contacts

Crescent Funerals

Funeral Support - 07833 533 490
Email: crescentfunerals@gmail.com
Web: www.crescent-funerals.com
Service hours: 8am - 10pm. 7 days a week

Out of Hour's Burials - 07999 776593
Email: bookings@crescent-funerals.com

Summer: Monday to Friday: 3pm to 7pm
 Weekends & Bank Holidays: 9am to 3pm

Winter: Weekends & Bank Holidays: 9am to 3pm

University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) Bereavement Services

Leicester Royal Infirmary

Opening hours: 09.00am. - 4.00pm. Monday to Friday
Enquiries - 0116 258 5194 or 0116 258 5196

Leicester General Hospital

Opening hours: 09.00am. - 4.00pm. Monday to Friday
Enquiries: 0116 258 4235 or 0116 258 4236

Glenfield Hospital

Opening hours: 09.00am. - 4.00pm. Monday to Friday
Enquiries: 0116 258 3401 or 0116 256 3417

Out of Hours: Liaise with Hospital Duty Manager 0300 303 1573

University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) LRI Mortuary

Opening hours: 09.00am – 5.00pm (Mon – Fri)
Enquiries: 0116 258 5596
Email: PPDmortuary@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Out of Hours: On Call – Liaise with Hospital Duty Manager

Leicester City Registrar of Births and Deaths

The City of Leicester Register Office
Town Hall, Town Hall Square
Leicester - LE1 9BG

Opening hours: 09.00am – 4.00pm (Mon – Fri)
Enquiries: 0116 454 1000
Email: nominated-officer@leicester.gov.uk

Leicestershire County Registrar of Births and Deaths

The Leicestershire County Register Office
Leicester Road
Glenfield
Leicestershire
LE3 8RN

Opening hours: 09.00am – 4.00pm (Mon – Fri)
Enquiries: 0116 305 6565
Email: registration@leics.gov.uk

HM Coroner for Leicester City and South Leicestershire

The Coroners Court
Town Hall, Town Hall Square
Leicester
LE1 9BG

Opening hours: 09.00am – 4.00pm (Mon – Fri)
Enquiries: 0116 454 1030
Email: leicester.coroner@leicester.gov.uk

HM Coroner Leicestershire and Rutland

HM Coroners
Council Offices
Southfield Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 2TR

Opening hours: 09.00am – 4.00pm (Mon – Fri)
Enquiries: 0116 305 7732
Email: hmc coroner@leics.gov.uk

Acknowledgements

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Dr SYEDA FARAH FARZANA (ROYAL BOLTON HOSPITAL NHS TRUST)

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