



SUPPORTIVE CARE PEARLS

From Robert Sawicki, M.D., Medical Director of OSF Home Care Services

Pulmonary Disease

Like heart disease and other organ failures, end-stage lung disease is extremely difficult to prognosticate. There is significant variability in survival, even amongst patients who have required intubation and mechanical ventilation. Patients with the following parameters have the lowest survival rates and should be considered for hospice referral.

- Dyspnea at rest.
- Poor response to bronchodilators.
- Frequent symptoms of fatigue, cough, decreased functional status, copious sputum.
- House or chair-bound
- Cyanosis, barrel-chested, wheezing, diminished breath sounds, and use of accessory muscles of respiration.
- FEV1 of less than 30% with use of bronchodilators
- More frequent ER visits or hospitalizations
- More frequent respiratory infections
- Presence of Right Heart Failure
- Hypoxia at rest
- O2 Saturation less than 88%
- Hypercapnia
- Weight loss
- Resting Tachycardia
- Co-morbidities

It is uncertain what number or combination of the above factors might predict a worse prognosis. Clinical judgment and individual assessment is crucial. As with other patients, consider whether you would be surprised if they died within a year.

The OSF Home Care Services Hospice team is available to consult on patients to help determine appropriateness. These patients, and all patients with chronic progressive disease, need to have Advance Care Planning to help identify their wishes for future medical care, and to assure that their wishes are honored.