

REASONS TO CALL A CHAPLAIN*

1. When a patient is anxious or fearful of surgery, therapy, or medical procedure, a chaplain can help patients and families identify the sources of their fears and help to mobilize the resources of faith, hope and love.
2. When a patient needs comfort, a chaplain can provide a caring presence, helpful scripture, emotional support, or timely prayer.
3. When for no reason a patient doesn't respond to medical treatment, a chaplain can help patients identify meanings they assign to their condition or pain.
4. When a patient or family want to complete an Advance Directive, a chaplain can help explain the form and be one of the witnesses of the patient's signing.
5. When patients and/or families have major health care and treatment decisions to make, a chaplain can help the doctor(s), patient, and family members consider the meanings they give to various health care options and make decisions they can accept.
6. When a patient's way of life must change following an illness, a chaplain can offer the stabilizing influence of spirituality, resources for hope, and an opportunity for new meaning in a changed lifestyle.
7. When a patient has a long term or terminal illness, a chaplain may be able to help the physician decide when and how to tell patients or family members. A chaplain can work with patients and families as they try to understand and accept the prognosis.
8. When a patient is dying, a chaplain can help families deal with the news, begin to accept the impending death, and find a source of strength, hope and comfort.
9. When a patient is admitted in a traumatic or emergency situation, a chaplain can keep the family members advised about the patient's condition, surgery, and admission. A chaplain also can give emotional support while families wait for news.
10. When a patient has died, a chaplain can provide ministry, support and comfort for families during bereavement.
11. When it is time for a family to consider organ or tissue donation, a chaplain can provide information about organ donation choices while helping families explore spoken and unspoken beliefs that may affect their decisions.
12. When hospital staff are having difficulty with the circumstances surrounding a particular case, a chaplain can help staff express their feelings, identify the meanings they have given to a situation, provide support and comfort, and if necessary, refer them to the employee assistance program for additional help.

*adapted from Margarte McClaskey, Mdiv., Director of Pastoral Care and Ethics Consultation, Rush Northshore Medical Center, Skokie, Illinois