

Intensive Care Patient Diaries

Information for bereaved families

What are patient diaries?

Patient diaries serve as a record of what has happened to patients during their stay in the intensive care unit. They are updated by the nursing staff as well as the wider multi-disciplinary team. Family members can also add to them.

Why use patient diaries?

Many patients have trouble remembering their ICU stay or may have confused / distorted memories. This can be due to several factors including being critically unwell, medications (e.g. sedatives and pain relief) or if they were delirious during their stay. Diaries can help patients to fill in memory gaps, as well as help them to make sense of some of the experiences they have had.

After their stay in the ICU some patients report symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) such as anxiety, nightmares, flashbacks and low mood. There is some evidence that patient diaries can help reduce such symptoms by allowing patients a way to process and understand what they have been through. Diaries can also be used as a tool to help relatives process their own experience of a loved one's ICU admission.

Reading your loved one's diary

When patients pass away, we offer their diaries to their loved ones. ICU diaries can be experienced by family members in very different ways. Some relatives can find it helpful in understanding the seriousness of their loved one's illness and bring acceptance of the outcome. Other people can find it a comfort, saying it helps them to maintain a bond with their loved one whilst trying to cope with their great loss. Therefore, it can be a helpful tool for some people to aide them through the grieving process.

However, some relatives can find it very painful to read as diaries can trigger powerful emotional responses which are difficult to manage through the grieving process. Therefore, it is important for relatives to receive their loved one's diary at the appropriate time and be supported through the experience.

I would like to discuss my diary with someone

Often people find that reading the diary can be an emotional experience. It can be helpful to read the diary with a loved one. The Critical Care Follow up team is here to support you and we would be happy to arrange a time for us to discuss the diary

What happens to the diary when a patient has died?

The Critical Care Follow Up team will contact to offer you the diary. You have the option to receive your diary in the post or come to collect it. Some people may not feel ready to receive their loved one's diary. If you do not wish to receive the diary, we are able to store it for you for up to a year. During this time, you can contact the team if decide you would like it. After a year we will destroy the diary.

Contacting us

You can contact our team by email at icufollowup@stgeorges.nhs.uk, or 'phone 07825 281 226.

Bereavement Support

You can access bereavement support through your GP. The following links are to various organisations and sources of help relating to bereavement.

Cruse Bereavement Care www.cruse.org.uk

WAY widowed and Young www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Marie Curie: Care and support through terminal illness www.mariecurie.org.uk

For young people and children

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childbereavementuk.org

British association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) www.bacp.co.uk/

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact patient.info@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm
Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.
Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

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