Passing the Last Torch: Pharmaceutical Transitions at the End of Life (FR403)
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Objectives
• Describe symptoms commonly experienced by patients nearing the end of life and medications frequently used to control these symptoms.
• Describe specific medication considerations in patients who will be transitioning from an acute-care facility to home-based hospice care.
• Determine which medications are related to terminal and related conditions and must be provided by the hospice.

Patients nearing death have critically sensitive medication management issues, which must be managed seamlessly when transitioning care from inpatient to home, or “passing the torch.” Despite having similar goals of care, palliative care and hospice teams can work independently, often causing discord and confusion for patients and families. Common problems include selection of medications for symptom management that are not on the hospice formulary, inconvenience for the patient and family (e., parenteral), and/or continuation of nonessential medications. The optimal situation would be for both teams to work together hand-in-hand to ensure optimal drug therapy outcomes.

This program will illustrate the importance of selecting effective medications that are titrated under close supervision in the hospital and communicating that plan of care to allow for a smooth transition. Medications and selected routes of administration should be maximally convenient for patients and families and selected with consideration of the hospice formulary and cost-effectiveness. When transitions in care are not meticulously planned, patients suffer and practitioners often need to make amends as their first action step. Participants will leave this session with a firm action plan for implementing change in their own practice and a heightened sensitivity for issues faced by clinicians, patients, and families on both sides of the transition.