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Final Clinical Reflection

Today, February 23, is the last day of my clinical preceptorship in the medical intensive care unit and I couldn't be more grateful for this experience. I have had three preceptors and they have all been exceptional in guiding me throughout each shift. I learned how to organize myself by what works best for me and prioritize the most important patients' needs. I have been assigned various types of patients so I have gotten to experience different patient outcomes. I am going to walk away from this preceptorship with better communication skills especially with family members of the patients. There is one specific patient I have in mind that has left an impression on me. He was a male in his 30s who was dying of alcoholic liver cirrhosis and his family was having a difficult time accepting his diagnosis. There were several days where his mother was asking the nurses for a "second opinion" from another physician. We had to explain to her that the doctor she wanted a second opinion from works at the same office as his attending physician and that they were in communication with each other. The patient during this time was also asking for water while on his fluid restriction, so we tried to explain to him and his mother that the CT of his lungs showed a severe amount of fluid and that's why he is on 100% oxygen on the nonrebreather mask which will eventually require intubation if he continues to drink water. After explaining to the patient and the family what could happen if he continues to drink water and be noncompliant, they didn't seem to fully understand. It was frustrating as his nurse because I wanted them to understand that he could pass away sooner if he's not following his orders. After some reflection, I realized they could have been in a state of crisis and shock because he is so young and would be leaving behind a daughter and wife. His mom probably

couldn't bear the idea of losing her son so early in life. Although I couldn't make sense of their feelings at the moment, it puts into perspective the grieving process is different for each individual. In my future career as a nurse, I will lead with empathy and acknowledge that even if I don't understand someone's decisions in the moment I will not judge or make assumptions. There was one other incident where a family member apologized to me for asking me to be continuously checking in on her brother and then opened up to me that she was just scared because she had already lost one brother not too long ago. I reassured her that I don't mind at all keeping a patient safe and that her feelings are valid. Those interactions have taught me the importance of building a trusting relationship with family members especially in the ICU when we see a lot of patients who are intubated or can't make decisions for themselves.