

THE FOUR BOXES METHOD

A SIMPLE TOOL

Four Box Method




- Medical Indications for Intervention
- Quality of Life
- Preferences of the Patient
- Contextual Issues

MEDICAL INDICATIONS

- What is patient's medical problem, diagnosis, prognosis?
- Is it acute, chronic, critical, reversible?
- What are the goals of treatment and probabilities of success?
- In case of therapeutic failure, what plans?
- How can benefit be provided- harm avoided

PATIENT PREFERENCES

- What preferences for treatment has the patient expressed? or refused?
- Does the patient understand the risks and benefits and has the patient given consent?
- Is the patient competent, is there evidence of incapacity to make decisions?
- Are there Advance Directives, surrogates?



QUALITY OF LIFE

- What are the prospects, with or w/o treatment, for a return to normal life?
- Any biases that might prejudice provider's evaluation of the patient's quality of life?
- What physical, mental, and social deficits may remain, even if treatment succeeds?
- Might the patient consider continued life to be judged as undesirable for self?



CONTEXTUAL FEATURES

- Family issues influencing treatment choice?
- Physician-Nurse issues influencing?
- Financial, economic, scarcity issues?
- Religious, cultural factors?
- Institutional, professional or legal issues?
- Any justification to breach confidentiality?
- Or to act contrary to the patient's wishes?