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Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center



A teaching hospital of
Harvard Medical School

Meeting with the ICU Team:

A Guide for Patients and Families



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Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center

330 Brookline Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
www.bidmc.org



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**Helping Patients and Families
Prepare for the Family Meeting**

What is a family meeting?

A family meeting is a time when those caring for the patient meet with the patient (if possible) and family to talk about the patient's care. It's a time to talk about what is happening medically with the patient, and to answer questions the patient or family may have about treatment or care. It's also an important time to talk about the patient's values and wishes regarding care during serious illness, and what the goals of treatment should be in each patient's case.

Family meetings can take place in the patient's room or in another location, depending on the wishes of the patient and family. It is different from the day-to-day conversations you may have with the health care team, because it's time set aside to talk in more detail about the care of a particular patient. Some patients and families may have more than one family meeting over the course of their hospitalization.

Some questions to think about prior to the meeting:

- What are your goals for this meeting?
- What information do you need about your/ your loved one's illness and treatment?
- What are your questions and concerns at this time?

Who will come to your family meeting?

Please speak with your nurse regarding the health care team members and family members that you feel should be at the meeting.

Health care team members may include the ICU doctor, any other doctors who are important to the patient's care, the nurse, social worker, and chaplain.

Questions other families have asked us in ICU family meetings:

Check the questions that you want to discuss, or write your own on the back of this brochure.

- Who are the patient's doctors and how do they work together?
- Why was the patient brought to the ICU?
- What has happened since then?
- What are his or her main medical problems now?
- What treatments are being given or planned?
- What do the doctors expect to happen over the next day (week, month, year)?
- What are the other treatment choices?
- What decisions do the patient and family need to make and when?

Documents to bring to the meeting (if you haven't done so already):

Bring any documents or papers (such as a health care proxy or living will) that relate to medical decisions for the ICU patient.

Help us learn more about your loved one

When patients can no longer communicate, we depend on those closest to the patient to help us understand their wishes. If your loved one can't talk to you or to the ICU team now, please think about:

- What things s/he may have said in the past about ICU treatments or end-of-life care.
- What s/he has said to you in the past when someone else was seriously ill.
- What you think your loved one would say today if s/he could talk and make decisions.

Sharing this information helps you and the ICU team decide together about the type of care that is "right" for you or your loved one.

Share your concerns

If you have concerns, worries, fears, or other feelings about your/ your loved one's condition or anything else related to ICU care, please be sure to share them with us at the meeting.

You may wish to write down your questions and notes on the back of this brochure and bring them with you.