

In her research, Davidson found that family members want information (Davidson, 2011). They want to understand what to expect. As death draws near, the person and the family may have questions, and they may be concerned

but not know what questions to ask. Forbes Hospice developed a Question Prompt Sheet (QPS) (Table 1), based on actual questions caregivers asked to help the family identify and ask questions (Hebert et al., 2008).

Table 1. Question Prompt Sheet

Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long does my loved one have? • Will my loved one recover? • What should I expect to happen over the course of the illness? • What caused the illness? • What are the common side effects of my loved one’s medications? • What can I expect when my loved one is dying? • What does dying look like? • Will my loved one be in pain? • Is my loved one in pain? • Can the pain medicine cause my loved one’s heart or breathing to stop? • What if my loved one stops eating—will they starve? • Will my loved one need a feeding tube? • Will my loved one need IV fluids? • What are the risks of the treatment my loved one is receiving? • Will the pain medicines stop working if used too often? • Will the pain medicines cause addiction? • Can my loved one hear me? • What do I do if my loved one seems depressed?
Practical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can I talk to about insurance? Financial concerns? • How do I get information about home health services, assisted living or nursing homes? • Who can I call if I have questions or need help? • How can I get in touch with the doctor? • How do I get information about hospice? • How do I get information about living wills? • How and when should I make funeral arrangements?
Psychosocial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I do if family members disagree about treatment or disagree about what should be done for my loved one? • Should I discuss death and dying with the my family? With our loved one? • How can I help the children understand what is happening?
Religious or spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can I speak to about religious and spiritual concerns? • Why is this happening? Why is God allowing this?

(Adapted from Hebert et al., 2008)

When you provide the family member with the QPS, you are communicating that it is normal to have questions and that questions are welcomed. The QPS can be adapted to address the unique needs of any community. Sharing information about what to expect in the last days and hours can validate what family members are seeing, help them anticipate what might come next, and help them participate in providing care.



Ethics Touchstone

Do any of these questions surprise you? How would you answer these questions if your loved one was dying?