rowcroft hospice

Shortness of Breath in the last days of life

PRESENT

If patient is breathless consider 2.5mg diamorphine sc stat

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If patient is breathless and anxious, consider midazolam 2.5mg sc stat along with diamorphine 2.5mg sc stat

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If two or more doses needed over 24 hrs, start a continuous infusion via syringe pump.

If breathless use diamorphine 5-10mg sc over 24 hrs
or
If breathless **and** anxious use midazolam 10mg sc over 24 hrs- with diamorphine

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If symptoms not controlled, seek medical/specialist advice

ABSENT

Midazolam 2.5-5mg sc prn
Diamorphine 2.5mg sc prn

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If two or more doses needed over 24hrs, start a continuous infusion as opposite

- **If hypoxic, trial (15-30 minutes) of oxygen may help. If helpful continue; if not remove.**
- **Remember the use of non-pharmacological interventions such as a fan, open window, calm environment, patient positioning.**
- **If secretions an issue refer to respiratory secretions flowchart attached.**
- **Irreversible dyspnoea in last days of life can sometimes only be managed with use of opioids and benzodiazepines. These may sedate the patient and therefore communication with the patient, if possible, and the relatives is essential. If needed seek specialist advice.**