



Open visiting hours in an intensive care unit – humanity as an imperative

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Introduction Intensive Care Units (ICU) offer a chance of recovery to critically ill individuals. Families of the patient place the life of their loved one into the hands of strangers – doctors, nurses and other medical staff while they themselves often remain on the other side of the ICU doors. Often, the perception of what the patient and their family are experiencing is lost, and in the fight to save a life, the focus on the HUMAN and their dignity is diminished.

Elaboration One of the most important prerequisites for reducing the dehumanization of patients is the introduction of more liberal visiting hours. Visits in the ICU can be divided into:

1. Restricted visits – limited visiting times, duration and number of visitors;
2. Flexible visiting hours – visits are allowed but with certain restrictions and
3. Open visiting hours – a fully liberal approach to visitors with minimal restrictions.¹

The research results, especially after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, demonstrate that strict visiting restrictions negatively affect patients and families. Many families have reported that they were deprived of their last moments with their loved ones and did not have the opportunity to say goodbye. On the other hand, a liberal approach brings numerous benefits – it reduces stress levels in both patients and families and shortens the number of days spent in the ICU.² Conclusion A hospital stay, especially in the ICU, induces high levels of stress and anxiety. The presence of families with their loved ones in the ICU has a mutually positive effect and can be a decisive factor in a positive treatment outcome.

Sometimes, neither all technological advancements nor all medical knowledge will be sufficient to save a human life. Sometimes, even the presence of family by the patient's bedside will not be enough, but it will make a significant difference in those final moments – moments when the physical presence of loved ones, their touch, words, and that last goodbye are the only medicine needed.

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LITERATURE

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