

UAB Palliative and Comfort Care Unit (PCCU)

The UAB Palliative and Comfort Care unit (PCCU) at UAB Hospital is a 12 bed acute care palliative unit that opened in March of 2006. It was one of the first units of its kind in the country and is dedicated to the care of patients and families with serious illness who are approaching a transition in their lives, either toward end of life, back to home, or to another type of facility with hospice. These patients may require aggressive symptom management and be approaching a transition in their lives, either toward end of life, home with home health or hospice or to another type of facility. While the PCCU is an acute care unit, it accepts a limited number of patients that are covered under their Hospice General Inpatient or GIP benefit. It is staffed by Board certified physicians as well as palliative advanced practice providers and learners including palliative medicine fellows.

Admissions to the PCCU for patients with serious illness or nearing end of life care are accepted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through our consultation services as well as our partners in the UAB Emergency Department and our community hospice providers. A full nursing team in addition to other essential interdisciplinary team members including palliative care coordinator, social work, psychology, music therapy, massage therapy, chaplaincy, animal assisted therapy, Arts in Medicine all see and evaluate patients on the PCCU. Patients who require some advanced technologies such as ventilators, vasopressors, supplemental nutrition, etc. may be accepted to the PCCU with specific goals for non-escalation or weaning of appropriate ambulatory therapies. Standardized comfort care order sets and templates are used in the care of patients with a completely integrated electronic medical record. Translator and telehealth services are available to increase access for remote family members and those who speak other languages.

An active bereavement protocol is in place for family members of patients who die on the PCCU and periodic services of remembrance are held. Annually, the PCCU receives around 650 admissions with an average daily census of 9 and an average length of stay of 5 days.