

Moral Dilemmas during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

Royal Free Hospital has 34 ICU beds + 4-8 Surgical HDU beds

Part of North Central London Sector

HCID Centre with specialist ID department

Admitted over 400 patients with Covid-19 across the two waves

Clinical Treatment

A new disease!

Lack of evidence base

Sometimes got it wrong – e.g. negative fluid balance

How do we evaluate new treatments?

Family visiting

During first wave, no visiting

Second wave, allow end of life.

Balance compassion to patient/relative with risk of harm to other patients/staff/relatives themselves

Issues over ensuring equity for all

Triage/Allocation of Resources

Decisions over who to admit

Encouraged early decision-making by medical team

Aimed for consensus amongst group

Trust Ethics group available

Exposure of Staff

Concerns over PPE

Exposure to extreme pressures of working

Support wellbeing where possible at the same time as maintaining the service

Summary

Several challenging ethical dilemmas in the ICU

Useful strategies were using consensus decision-making and sharing the burden of workload within the region

Supporting staff afterwards is critical