



THRIVE is the Society of Critical Care Medicine's (SCCM) initiative to provide resources and education for ICU patient survivors and their families related to post-intensive care syndrome. Every year, millions of Americans survive critical illness; but despite the efforts of their ICU, many are left with ongoing problems. THRIVE offers education, resources and community to help patient survivors and families after the ICU. Visit [sccm.org/THRIVE](http://sccm.org/THRIVE) for more information.

Date:

To:

From:

Phone:

Patient:

I recently cared for your patient, referenced above, in our intensive care unit. This patient had the following diagnoses and hospital course.

Date of admission:

Date of discharge:

Diagnoses:

Hospital course (insert narrative):

Surgeries/procedures:

Discharge medications (mark new medications with asterisks):

I would also like to make you aware of **post-intensive care syndrome (PICS)**, a pattern of symptoms experienced by some patients who have been hospitalized in the ICU. Often these symptoms go unrecognized; sometimes patients are reluctant to admit that they are experiencing them.

### **What are the symptoms of PICS? (Patients may experience this even if they were not in the ICU for a long period of time)**

1. Physical impairments:
  - Chronic fatigue and weakness
  - Inability to perform even basic activities of daily living
  - *It is important to note that the deficit may appear to be unrelated to the reason for the patient's ICU admission (eg, a patient admitted for urosepsis may have upper extremity weakness). Other medical causes must be ruled out, but PICS should be considered a possibility.*
2. Cognitive impairments:
  - Memory loss
  - Decreased attention
  - Inability to perform cognitive functions that were easy for them prior to illness
3. Mental health
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Sleep problems/nightmares

PICS can also affect family members (this is called PICS-F); they may experience symptoms of depression and anxiety for months after the patient comes home.

### **What should be done if a patient or family member exhibits symptoms consistent with PICS or PICS-F?**

It is very important to reassure patients and families with PICS that what they are experiencing is not unusual for people who have been hospitalized in the ICU. Although we are still learning about how best to treat PICS, here are some articles that you may find useful:

- Davidson JE, Harvey MA, Schuller J. [Post-intensive care syndrome: what it is and how to help prevent it](#). *Am Nurse Today*. 2013;8(5):32-37.
- Davidson JE, Jones C, Bienvenu OJ. [Family response to critical illness: postintensive care syndrome - family](#). *Crit Care Med*. 2012 Feb;40(2):618-624.
- Needham DM, Davidson J, Cohen H, et al. [Improving long-term outcomes after discharge from intensive care unit: report from a stakeholders' conference](#). *Crit Care Med*. 2012 Feb;40(2):502-509.

What should be done if a patient or family member exhibits symptoms like these?

- It is important to reassure patients and their families that some of these symptoms are not unusual for people who have been through the ICU experience. We are still learning how common these problems are and what we can do to reduce and treat them. Please see the [THRIVE website](#) for helpful resources.

Finally, patients and family members may benefit from referral to a mental health professional; a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or other mental health counselor can often assist patients and families in developing coping strategies for dealing with this syndrome. Patients and families may also benefit from ongoing therapy services (speech, occupational, and physical therapies).

I would be happy to speak with you any time if you have questions about this patient's ICU course or about what to expect after critical illness. Feel free to contact me at the phone number above.