AACN Protocols for Practice: Palliative Care and End-of-Life Issues in Critical Care sets forth the evidence-based guidelines for providing appropriate care, whether aggressively life-saving or palliative end-of-life care.

Critical care nurses spend more time with patients and families facing the end of life than any other health care professional. Nurses are intimately involved in all aspects of end-of-life care and they are in position to address the variety of needs facing individuals at this juncture. Expert nursing care has the potential to greatly reduce the burden and distress of those at life's end and the ability to offer support for the many physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs of patients and their families.

The Protocols equip critical care nurses to effectively manage the following:

* symptom management
* family issues and intervention
* withholding and withdrawing life support
* communication and conflict resolution
* caring for the caregiver

Additionally, the text includes a state-of-the-science review that provides guidance to critical care nurses while acknowledging the limited evidence-based research that exists.