

Advance Medical Directives

Help our patients protect their rights

What are Advance Medical Directives?

- Documents that allow patients to give direction about their future medical care
- They provide patient's the right to refuse or accept medical care if they become mentally or physically unable to choose or communicate their wishes

Two types of advance directives:

1. Living Will
2. Durable Power of Attorney

Living Will

- Written instructions that explain patient's wishes regarding health care should he or she have a terminal condition
- Take effect while a patient is still living
- Patients may obtain a living will in addition to a Durable Power of Attorney

Durable Power of Attorney

- A person (called a proxy) that is named in a written document to make decisions for the patient if they become unable to do so

What can advance directives do for our patients?

- Protect patients in extreme conditions such as irreversible brain damage, permanent coma, terminal illness
- Limit life-prolonging measures such as CPR, IV therapy, respirators, and dialysis
- Provide Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNR) to refuse attempts to restore heartbeat
- State a patient's wishes to donate specific organs or their entire body
- Address pain relief (requesting or refusing it)
- Allow patient's values to guide their future medical care
- Allow patient's to make their own decisions
- Save families from facing difficult decisions
- Allow patients to embrace their spiritual beliefs

How are advance directives created?

1. Check the laws in your state.
2. Put your wishes in writing, being as specific as possible.

3. Sign and date your advance medical directives, and have them witnessed and notarized if necessary in your state.
4. Keep a card in your wallet stating you have advance directives and where to find them.
5. Give your physician a copy as well as you proxy if using a durable power of attorney.
6. Discuss your advance directives with your family, friends, physician and proxy when comfortable doing so.
7. Give copies to the emergency contact person (relative or friend).

Five Wishes

- Meets legal requirements within Virginia and many other states as an advance directive
- Helps you express how you want to be treated if you become seriously ill and unable to speak for yourself
- Looks at the medical, personal, emotional, and spiritual needs of the patient
- Encourages discussing your wishes with family and primary physician
- Five Wishes lets your family and doctors know:
 - Which person you want to make health care decisions for you when you can't make them
 - The kind of medical treatment you want or don't want
 - How comfortable you want to be
 - How you want people to treat you
 - What you want your loved ones to know

Help in preparing advance directive

Local Resources

- A lawyer
- Hospitals, home health agencies, and long term care facilities
- State attorney general's office
- Local hospice (Blue Ridge Hospice)

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