Advanced Directives

Advance care planning is the process of preparing for future care if the person becomes incapable of making their own decisions. There are two kinds of written advance directives, a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care. A living will may include a patient's wishes regarding life-sustaining treatments, comfort care, and artificial nutrition and hydration. A durable power of attorney for healthcare allows someone the patient trusts to make choices should they become unable to make their own decisions. Do not resuscitate is an order on the medical record of a patient who desires no resuscitative attempts to be made if their heart or breathing stops. Allow natural death is a term that may be used instead of DNR. Allow natural death may be implemented instead of DNR to help make the authorization easier for the family to handle. POLST are medical orders that must be completed and signed by a healthcare professional. It is a document that helps people with life-threatening medical conditions ensure that they get the kind of medical care they do, or do not want to receive.



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Advance Care Planning

Process of Planning for Future Care
Future Care-bear Plan
Advance care planning is the process of preparing for future care if the person becomes incapable of making their own decisions. It is suggested that any adult, no matter their age or state of health, develop their advanced care plan.

Living Will

Instructions about Healthcare
Instructions Script
A living will gives directions about the health care that a person wishes to be provided or not provided in certain situations. A living will describes a patient's wishes regarding care during terminal conditions, persistent vegetative state, organ donation, or autopsy.

Life-Sustaining Treatments
Life-Sustaining Treatment
Life-sustaining treatments may be one of the areas outlined in a patient's living will. Life-sustaining treatments are any procedure, technology, and medication that suspends life. Some examples include ventilation, dialysis, diagnostic tests, antibiotics, artificial nutrition, transfusions, CPR.

Level of Comfort Care
Levels on Comforter and Care-bear
A patient can include the level of comfort care they want to receive in their living will. They may wish to be as completely comfortable and free of pain even if it prolongs their death. Comfort care may include stopping any medications that do not support their comfort, stopping blood draws, lab work, therapies, and investigative studies, providing medication to relieve pain, and providing emotional support.

Artificial Nutrition and Hydration
Artificial Nutrition and Hydration
Artificial nutrition and hydration is another area that can be included in a living will. Artificial nutrition includes total parenteral nutrition, nasogastric tube, or a gastrostomy tube. A patient may wish to discontinue artificial nutrition and hydration if it is the primary treatment keeping them alive, or they may voice a desire to continue this treatment for this same reason.

Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare

Appointed Person to Make Decisions
Pointing Person with Decisions
A durable power of attorney is another kind of written advance directive. A durable power of attorney for health care allows someone the patient trusts to make choices should they become unable to make their own decisions.

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Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

No CPR

No-sign Resuscitator

Do not resuscitate is an order on the medical record of a patient who desires no resuscitation attempts to be made if their heart or breathing stops. This means that CPR should not be attempted, but other life sustaining measures like feeding tubes, intubation and chemotherapy may be attempted.

Allow Natural Death (AND)

All Natural Death

Allow natural death is a term that may be used instead of DNR. Facilities may vary on which one they use; some may include both. Allow natural death may be implemented instead of DNR to help make the authorization easier for the family. Allow natural death sounds positive and peaceful as opposed to "do not resuscitate," which sounds like it is preventing care.

Physician Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST)

Medical Order

Medical Order Signed by Healthcare Professional

POLST are medical orders that must be completed and signed by a healthcare professional. A patient does not fill them out. A POLST form is a document that helps people with life-threatening medical conditions ensure that they get the kind of medical care they do, or do not want to receive.

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