

A Brief Look at Advance Directives

Your patient has the right to make and direct decisions concerning his/her medical care. S/he can choose the doctor and can accept or refuse the care the doctor gives or the suggestions the doctor makes. The patient can also decide ahead of time, or "in advance," what care should be given when s/he can no longer make decisions. Advance Directives include a living will, medical power of attorney and an out-of-hospital do not resuscitate order.

- A living will defines the medical treatment to be given if the patient is unable to communicate at the end of life. This could include the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining medical treatment.
- A medical power of attorney allows the patient to appoint someone to make decisions about the medical care if the patient cannot.
- An out-of-hospital do not resuscitate order is put in place if the patient has six months or less to live. It means that the patient does not want to be revived if his/her heartbeat or breathing stops because of cardiac or respiratory arrest.

It is our policy not to withhold care based on whether or not the patient has an advance directive. Each patient will be given information about his/her right to refuse medical treatment and the right to have advance directives. If the patient already has advance directives in place, we will ask for a copy to put in the medical record and we will document that advance directives are in place. If the patient does not have advance directives in place but wants them, we will make a referral to a social services worker.

As a member of our staff, it is important for you to know that:

- We will not provide any medical treatment that the patient has not consented to receive.
- We will not withhold treatment or discriminate in any other way against the patient based on whether or not s/he has an advance directive.
- We will recognize and honor advance directives as evidence of the patient's desire to have medical treatment withheld.

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QUIZ

Employee: _____ Date: _____

Graded By (RN): _____ Grade: _____

1. The agency will choose the doctor for the patient.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. The agency chooses in advance what treatments the patient will receive.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. Advance directives include a living will, medical power of attorney and an out-of-hospital do not resuscitate order.
 - a) True
 - b) False
4. We will honor advance directives even if it's to have medical treatment withheld.
 - a) True
 - b) False