Improving Advance Directive Use Through Provider Education at Newtown Primary Care

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES
&
ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

Start the conversation today

WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

An advance directive is a document, which has two parts.

1) Assignment: Assigning a health care representative (HCR)
   - Patients have the option to choose an alternate HCR as well. It's important to remind patients that this should be someone who will be able to and feels comfortable with communicating their wishes and values.
2) Living Will: Patient preferences for end-of-life-care
   - This allows for patients to describe which interventions they would accept or decline. There is also a section where they can specify treatments like blood transfusions or intubation.

Who needs an Advance Directive?

- Anybody over the age of 18 can benefit from having an advance directive on file.
- Patients who are not legally married and want their partner to be their HCR.
- Patients who are not legally divorced and don't want the spouse to be their HCR
- Patients that have multiple children and have a specific preference for their HCR.
- Emergencies can occur; therefore, it is best to be prepared for them beforehand.

Barriers & Recommendations

- Time: Find out the best time to incorporate a quick discussion with patients about their values/wishes and schedule a follow up appointment to address them if necessary.
- Reimbursement: Medicare will now reimburse providers for Advance Care Planning conversations of 16 minutes or more.
- Discomfort: Using the CAPC module on advance care planning to get used to verbiage to start the conversation in a comfortable way.
- Ultimately, having a conversation regarding the HCR portion of the advance directive, even if they do not complete the living will form, is a meaningful first step.

Common Misconceptions

- Advance directives are not the same as a Code/DNR/Do Not Treat status.
- Many think you need an attorney to complete one or think it needs to be notarized to make it legal.
- The document is effective ONLY when the patient is no longer able to make his/her own decisions anymore.

Resources

- The Conversation Project: Has two documents that are helpful and free to access that are great resources for both patients and providers. **How To Choose a Health Care Proxy and How To Be a Health Care Proxy** and **The Conversation Project Starter Kit**. They also have posters and other ideas to help get the discussion started. https://theconversationproject.org
- The Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC): The CAPC has a module that is another great resource and WCHN has a membership to CAPC. You can use your WCHN email address to access the module at your convenience. https://www.capc.org
- Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End, by Atul Gawande
- The Conversation: A Revolutionary Plan for End-Of-Life Care, by Angelo Volandes