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**Advance Directives: Recommendations**

Advance directives are considered to be an important component of a patients’ medical record that promotes autonomy, dignity, and reassurance. Advance directives are legal documents that allow patients to write out their wishes about medical care ahead of time for family members, friends and health care providers. The use of advance directives alleviates the majority of uncertainty for patients, their families, and health care providers. Yet the rate of advanced directive completion is extremely low. Only about 15-25% of adults complete advance directives (Wissow et al., 2004). In this paper, I will discuss recommendations for the promotion, completion and implementation of advance directives.

The first step in the promotion, completion and implementation of advance directives begins with health care providers becoming more comfortable with screening and initiating the discussion about the benefits of advanced directives during a patients routine visit. Health care providers are often extremely busy and often forget to discuss the benefits of advance directives with their patients. Due to this, reminders should be used, whether it be mailed or computerized, to remind health care providers to discuss these benefits. The article, “Promoting Advance Directive among Elderly Primary Care Patients,” by Wissow et al. (2004), states that “15% of patients whose doctors received reminders, compared to 4% in a control group, made new advance directives.” Printed materials, such as pamphlets and brochures should be available to health care provides to hand out during patient visits. This may help improve the completion rates of advance directives. Patients can also be referred to social workers or palliative care agents for more education and future help in developing an advance directives (Alfonso, 2009). Follow ups, whether they are telephone calls or mailed letters, should be done to encourage patients to complete advance directives and ask questions.

Another way to promote the completion of advance directives is the use of advertisements and media. The use of billboards, social media, TV/radio commercials, posters on buses, trains, taxis and in clinics can help promote the completion of advance directives. One could also create a website that has digital advance directive forms, videos to watch, and information about the steps needed to be taken to complete an advance directive. In the article “Promoting Advance Directive. The Administrators' Role in Encouraging Advance Directives,” by Paul B. Hofmann and Bruce Jennings (2004), states that “within the first five days after the American Hospital Association (AHA) launched its “Put It In Writing” website, it received more than 11,830 individual visitors.” The AHA’s link should be on the websites of other organizations. Health fairs, community events and peer group meetings should be made available to patients so that they could ask questions and necessary information can be provided. The article “Implementing Advance Directives in Office Practice,” by David Spoelhof and Barbara Elliott (2012), states that “group-based interactive interventions are more effective than individualized interventions,” this means that information presented in a group setting stimulates a discussion that generates needed question and answers.

Advanced directives can also be promoted and implanted through legislative efforts. Health care providers and patients could write to their congress representative about ways to improve advance directives implementation and give examples of actions that can be taken to change current procedures. Law makers can create a mandatory law that forces hospitals and clinics to promote the completion of advance directives among their health care providers and use a centralized database to store all completed advance directives.

Wheatear it be the use of media or physician reminders, advance directives promote patient autonomy and alleviates uncertainty in patients, their families and health care providers.

**References**

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