



HealthyCT Participating Provider Update
December 29, 2015

ADVANCED CARE PLANNING

Advance care planning is not just about old age. At any age, a medical crisis could leave someone too ill to make his or her own healthcare decisions. Even if they are not sick now, making healthcare plans for the future is an important step toward making sure patients get the medical care they would want, even when doctors and family members are making the decisions for them.

Proactively discussing with patients what they would or would not want if recovery from illness or injury is improbable gives you the opportunity to address patients' concerns and expectations and clarify misunderstandings individuals may have about specific medical conditions or interventions. Encouraging patients to do the following helps to ensure that patients' own values, goals, and preferences will inform care decisions when they cannot speak for themselves:

- share their views with their families or loved ones
- record them in advance directives
- name a surrogate decision maker.

Physicians can play an important role in initiating and guiding the advance care planning process by making it a routine part of care for all patients, which is revisited regularly to explore any changes a patient may have in his or her wishes. This process ultimately can benefit patients; it can provide them with a sense of control and peace of mind with regard to their future health care.

It is important to support advance care planning decisions with formal documents, such as an advance directive. An advance directive might include a living will, through which a person indicates whether specific medical interventions would be desired, or a durable power of attorney for health care, whereby a patient designates a specific person to act as their agent for health care decisions in the event the patient is incapable of making such decisions.

Periodically review with the patient his or her goals, preferences and chosen decision maker, which often change over time or with changes in health status. Update the patient's medical records accordingly when preferences have changed to ensure that these continue to reflect the individual's current wishes.

Advanced Care Planning is beneficial to all parties involved as it gives the patient peace of mind that their wishes will be followed and that they can make these decisions so their loved ones do not have to.

1-855-HLTHYCT (1-855-458-4928)

www.healthyct.org