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ISSUE 7 | JULY | 2010



DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT A SPECIFIC TOPIC?
SUBMIT SUGGESTIONS TO:

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HELPFUL TIPS TO EMPOWER
DIALYSIS PATIENTS

Kidney Chronicles

Advance Directives and End-of-Life Care

What is an Advance Directive?

An advance health care directive, also known as living will, personal directive, advance directive, or advance decision, is a legal statement which instructs doctors and health care providers of the medical decisions you have made for future crisis care, even if you cannot communicate these decisions yourself. An advance directive appoints a person to make such decisions on your behalf.

Are there different kinds of advance directives?

There are two basic kinds:

- 1) A living will, the more common type, tells your doctor or health care provider in writing what type of care you want, or do not want, if you should become unable to make medical decisions.
- 2) A durable power of attorney for health care decisions or a health care proxy allows you to name someone, such as a spouse, partner, child or close friend, to act on your behalf if you are unable to do so. It is important to ask this person if he or she is willing to act as your "agent" and to talk about what treatments you

would want and those you would not want, as well as your short- and long-term goals and values. Depending on your state's laws you may have both a living will and a durable power of attorney or a combination of them in a single form. This combination is often to provide the most comprehensive guidance regarding your care. One example of a combination document is the **Five Wishes*** advance directive.

What types of decisions can I make in an advance directive?

With an advance directive, it may be possible to accept all treatments recommended by the health care provider, accept some treatments and refuse others, or refuse all recommended treatments. In your advance directive, you can choose to receive pain medicines for comfort even if you refuse other treatments. You may be able to accept or refuse other treatments, such as:

- ◆ Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to restore breathing and blood circulation. (This includes heart

massage, drugs, electric shocks and artificial breathing machines.)

- ◆ Tube feedings, including giving food and/or water through a tube into a vein or into the stomach.
- ◆ Artificial respiration (ventilator or respirator), which is a machine that breathes for a person through a tube in the throat.
- ◆ Dialysis for kidney failure, either hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis.
- ◆ Blood transfusions or blood products; you may also decide whether you would only want blood from your family members or friends.

It is important to speak with a lawyer or social worker, or get a copy of your state's advance directive forms to help you understand specific state laws, including limitations. You are not required by law to have an advance directive.

* *Five Wishes can be found at <http://networkofnewengland.org/Patient&Community/5wishes.pdf>*



KIDNEY END-OF-LIFE COALITION

Dedicated to End-of-Life Care for Kidney Patients

Mission: To promote effective interchange between patients, families, caregivers, payers, and providers in support of integrated patient-centered end-of-life care of chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients. You can visit the Kidney End-of Life Coalition at www.kidneyeol.org.