It’s Your Life – Your Terms

“Making Health Care Decisions With a Serious Illness”

Tracy Christner, Executive Director
Advance Care Planning Facilitator & Instructor
Objectives

• Define advance care planning and discuss the importance
• Explore value-based decision making
• Discuss how to give your decisions a voice
• Describe strategies for getting your wishes honored
Advance Care Planning is a Process

Understanding, Reflection & Discussion
It’s about...

• Learning about options
• Thinking about values
• Talking about decisions
• Documenting wishes
• Sharing them with others
Advance Care Planning is:

• is not a “one size fits all” discussion
• Readiness
• Goals for care
• Values, spirituality & cultural beliefs
Terms

Advance Directive
• instructions, written or discussed in advance, concerning any aspect of a person’s healthcare. Includes: living will, designation of healthcare surrogate, organ/tissue donation, preplanned funeral arrangements, etc.

Living Will
• a legal document used to designate a person's medical decisions concerning life-prolonging procedures

Last Will & Testament
• a legal document to designate how a person’s estate (assets) will be distributed


**Terms**

Healthcare Surrogate

- a trusted person designated by an individual to make medical decisions upon incapacity

Healthcare Proxy

- an adult who has not been expressly designated but is authorized to make health care decisions (absence of HCS)
Terms

Durable Power of Attorney

• *Durable*, meaning it is not affected if a person becomes incapacitated and it lasts until the death of the person who gave it

• Only for financial unless medical is specifically spelled out in DPOA

• FL has HCS, some states have DPOA

/Healthcare
What decisions are we talking about?

1. Choosing a health care surrogate

2. Medical decisions about life-prolonging procedures
   - Any medical procedure, treatment, or intervention which sustains or restores a vital function
   - Does not include medication or medical procedure that provides comfort or alleviates pain
Learning About Options

Make informed treatment decisions

- CPR
- Breathing Machines
- Antibiotics
- Dialysis
- Tube Feeding
It’s not just about what you don’t want…it’s about what you do want.
Thinking About Values

• No one can define quality of life but you

• What qualities in life are valued?
  ✓ Family
  ✓ Independence
  ✓ Spirituality
  ✓ Mobility
  ✓ Mental capacity

• What are the short & long-term goals?
Choosing a Health Care Surrogate

• The most important part of the advance care planning process.
What makes a Good HCS?

• Able
• Willing
• Local, preferably
• Not intimidated by hospital or physicians
• Will follow your wishes, even if they disagree
• Able to ask questions and make decisions
• Is aware of your wishes and values, because you have discussed them
• A strong advocate
What does the surrogate do?

• Makes healthcare treatment decisions
• Takes steps to see that wishes are honored
• Talks to the doctor/health care team
• Authorizes treatment or has it withdrawn per pt. wishes
• Has access to medical records
• Can authorize transportation to another facility
FACT

Not making a decision IS making a decision
Florida law will appoint someone to act

- Spouse
- Adult child(ren)
- Parent(s)
- Adult sibling
- Adult relative
- Close friend
- Clinical social worker

- Court Appointed Guardian
Talking About Decisions

Communicating preferences to:

- Family
- Loved ones
- Health care professionals
Talk to Your Doctor

• Discuss medical treatments with your doctor. He/she knows your condition, diagnosis, prognosis, etc.

• Good communication is key

• Understanding gray areas

• Be empowered “no decision about me, without me”
What should I discuss with my physician?

• Questions to help you better understand your diagnosis, treatment, prognosis
• Benefits / burdens of treatment
• What can you expect to happen?
• Your definition of an acceptable outcome
• Your fears/concerns
The Living Well Concept

• What activities or experiences are most important for you to live well?
• What fears or worries do you have about your illness or medical care?
• If you have to choose between living longer and quality of life, how would you approach this balance?
• What needs or services would you like to discuss?
• Are there any special events or activities that you are looking forward to?
• What sustains you when you face serious challenges in your life?
• Do you have religious or spiritual beliefs that are important to you?
Documenting Wishes

Living Will

• Written instructions for medical treatment

• ONLY when you are no longer able to communicate your choices yourself
Sharing Your Decisions

• Keep original where it can be easily found

• Copies to:
  • Physician (s)
  • Healthcare surrogate
  • Family and caregivers (all children)
  • Hospital medical records
  • Spiritual advisor
But Wait... 

THERE'S MORE!!!
How often should it be reviewed?

• Remember the 5 Ds
  – a Decade
  – a Divorce
  – a Death
  – a Diagnosis
  – a Decline
What NOT to Do

• Don’t wait to address advance care planning

• Don’t assume your health care surrogate knows what you want without discussing it

• Don’t choose more than one person as your primary HCS
The Benefits of Planning in Advance

• Prevents under treatment/over treatment

• Reduces stress of medical decision process on others

• Enhances guidance to surrogate
Our Services

• Assistance for individuals and families
• Professional training courses
• Community and corporate presentations
• Advance directives – free of charge
• Continuing education courses for healthcare, legal and faith professionals
• Resource library
The purpose of **Empath Choices for Care** is to educate and empower people to communicate and document their health care choices so that their wishes are honored.
Expertise, Support & Compassion
Every Step of Your Journey

Empath Health is a not-for-profit integrative network of care encompassing hospice, palliative home health and physician services, assistance for independent living and daycare for seniors, services for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and advance care planning. Additional programs and services are in development.

Empath Health Members Include:

• Suncoast Hospice
• Suncoast Hospice Foundation
• Suncoast PACE
• Suncoast Solutions
• Empath Home Health
• Empath Choices for Care
• AIDS Service Association of Pinellas (ASAP)
• Suncoast Hospice Institute
Your 3 Takeaways Today

1. Advance care planning is a process that involves learning, thinking, talking, documenting and sharing.

2. Designating a health care surrogate (your superhero) is key.

3. The conversation is the most important part.
Advance care planning is a gift to those you love.
Our contact information

www.empathchoicesforcare.org

5771 Roosevelt Blvd.
Clearwater, FL  33760

(727) 536-7364

Thank You!