

Honoring a Patient's Advance Directives at UW Health

What is advance care planning?

Advance Care Planning (ACP) helps you think about and name what is vital to you. The goal is to make sure people get healthcare that follows their values, goals, and wishes.

This may include choosing a trusted person(s) to make healthcare decisions for patients who can no longer make their own.

What are advance directives?

These are legal forms that allow adult patients to state their healthcare wishes. These forms tell others about your wishes. They can help guide your medical care in case you cannot make your own decisions in the future. There are two kinds of these forms – the Power of Attorney for Healthcare (POA) and the Living Will.

The POA allows you to name the person(s) you want to make healthcare decisions for you. This is helpful in case you are not able to state your wishes, whether short-term or at the end of life. If you wish to complete these forms, please talk with a nurse or social worker. There is no charge for this.

The Living Will (Declaration to Health Care Professionals) allows you to state your care wishes if you have a terminal condition or are in a continued vegetative state. Though the Living Will is a statement of your wishes, it should not be used alone.

Can advance directives be changed?

Yes. Your healthcare wishes may change with life events. You should make updates as your life changes. We can help you if you want to make changes.

Who makes healthcare decisions when a patient can no longer do so?

Patients who have a POA will have a healthcare agent. Most often, this is a family member or close friend. When doctors decide that a patient can no longer make their own healthcare decisions, the healthcare agent will be asked to do so.

What if I don't have an advance directive?

In this case, doctors will turn to adult family members to make healthcare decisions. Being a family member does not make someone a legal decision maker in the state of WI. Your best legal option is to complete a POA to name healthcare agents.

If you require a nursing home stay and you are not able to make healthcare decisions, a guardianship will be required. This takes both time and money.

What are UW Health's policies on end-of-life matters?

UW Health honors a patient's advance directives to the extent that is legal.

Adult patients who can make their own decisions have a right to refuse or stop all forms of treatment. This includes treatment that will prolong life, such as dialysis, breathing machines (ventilators), feeding tubes, and CPR.

At UW Health we do all we can to promote health. If your heart stops beating or you stop breathing, we will attempt CPR unless you and your doctor have chosen not to. If you make that choice, your doctor will write a **No CPR Order**.

If you **do not** want CPR, please talk with the doctor caring for you. Request that an order be written **each time** you are in the hospital.

If you have a No CPR order and are planning to have surgery, talk with your doctor about the status of your order.

Some patients may ask their doctors to write an Out of Hospital Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order. Patients who have this type of Out of Hospital DNR Order wear a special wristband when they are not in the hospital. The wristband lets emergency staff know of the patient's DNR wishes. State law says these orders are valid only in Wisconsin.

Patients who have an emergency in one of our clinics will likely be taken to our Emergency Room. Here, patients can receive or refuse treatment to prolong life and will receive comfort.

All patients wearing an Out of Hospital DNR wristband will receive comfort measures during transport.

The Ethics Committee can help patients, families, and members of the healthcare team talk about ethical issues that may arise. To talk about these issues, contact the Ethics consultant on call.

Who to Call

Inpatient UW Health Social Worker
(608) 263-8667

UW Health Ambulatory Social Worker
(608) 821-4144.

You can also find out more online at <https://www.uwhealth.org/acp>.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2022. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6162