

Resources

Making End-of-Life Decisions Simpler

Because many seniors are not capable of understanding standard advance directives, a collaborative effort between the Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA), San Francisco General Hospital, and the University of California San Francisco (SFGH-UCSF) has resulted in the development of an easier-to-read, illustrated version of this important document. The form is written at the 5th grade reading level and contains culturally appropriate illustrations that are designed to explain the text. Research shows that most advance directives today are written above a 12th grade reading level, and even those written at lower reading levels contain accompanying graphics that do not aid in making the documents easier to understand. The easier advance directive has been reported to be associated with greater patient acceptability, self-efficacy with treatment decisions, and comprehension, especially for patients with language and literacy barriers. Called the “Easy Advance Directive,” the form is divided into 3 parts for:

- choosing a health care agent who can make standard medical decisions for the patient who is too sick to make such decisions for themselves;
- allowing the individual to make health care choices while still capable so those who care for the patient are aware of their wishes at a time when he or she is too ill to make their intentions known; and
- providing necessary signatures that make the document legally binding.

Copies of the Easy Advance Directive can

be downloaded at no cost from the IHA Web site (www.iha4health.org) in both English and Spanish. Although developed for hospitals and nursing facilities in California, the document can be generated in a format and language that is specific to each state’s laws. However, if the form is changed to meet individual state requirements, organizations are asked to inform IHA and SFGH-UCSF by sending an e-mail to gmayer@iha4health.org.

End-of-Life/Palliative Education Resource Center Resources

The End-of-Life/Palliative Education Resource Center has a full list of end-of-life Web sites and Web-based resources (www.eperc.mcw.edu/links/index.htm) on issues including advance directives, palliative care, pain management, practitioner and patient education, and other topics. Here is a sampling of some of the listed sites:

- Alzheimer’s Association
www.alz.org
- American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
www.aahpm.org
- American Academy of Pain Management
www.aapainmanage.org
- American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives
www.aacpi.wisc.edu
- Center to Advance Palliative Care
www.capc.org
- EPEC: Education for Physicians on End-of-Life Care
www.epec.net
- Hospice Foundation of America
www.hospicefoundation.org
- Kaiser Permanente Palliative Care Program Toolkit
www.growthhouse.org/palliative
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
www.nhpco.org
- Palliative Care Nursing
www.palliativecarenursing.net

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