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April 16, 2020 was National Health Care Decision Day. Originally, I had plans for GPC to have a day dedicated to Advanced Care Planning. Due to the Pandemic, this has brought Advanced Directives to the forefront. Advanced Directives have become a heightened discussion due to COVID 19.

What is an Advanced Directive?

A written statement of a persons wishes regarding medical treatment made to ensure that person's desires are carried out should they become unable to communicate them to a physician.

This term is used to describe documents that give specific instructions about future medical care and treatments.

Advanced Directives can include: Living Will (not the same as a Last Will and Testament), Do Not Resuscitate Order, Withholding/Withdrawing Treatments and Health care agent/ Health Care Power of Attorney.

A Health care Power of Attorney is different from a Financial Power of Attorney.

Why should I complete an Advance Directive?

This document helps physicians and family members carry out your medical wishes and mental health care if you are too ill to decide for yourself (conscious, or too weak to verbalize)

Who should complete an Advanced Directive?

Adults (18 years and older)

Steps to get started:

- **Choose a Health Care Agent/ Health Care Decision maker.** Think about "who" you respect and best understands your desires. This person is the designated person who "speaks" on your behalf when you are unable to voice your wishes. They are the person who carries out ***your wishes.***
- **Who can be a Health Care Agent?** Your Health Care Agent can be a spouse, child, partner, significant other, friend, etc
 - It is a good idea to choose at least 2 Health Care Agents /health care decision makers if one of them is unable to make decisions at the time you need their services.
- **Ensure you have a conversation** with the person you choose as your Health Care Agent so they know what your wishes are, do not assume they will *automatically* do it.

- **Get your paperwork in order.** Obtain documents from your lawyer, primary care physician, or Pam Phillips RN FCN. Paperwork varies from state to state.
- **Do not sign your Advanced Directives.** The most common requirement is that the document is signed by you and 2 witnesses (not relatives or persons who will be beneficiaries), lawyer, or a notary. The requirements vary from state to state.

What is a Living Will?

A living will specifies your wishes, your organ donation preferences, your treatment preferences, and your personal values, including your goals for end of life.

Living Wills may include:

- CPR resuscitation (CPR): What do you want done if your heart stops beating and/or you stop breathing
- Artificial Ventilation
- Blood Transfusions
- Hospital Transfer
- Medical workup
- Antibiotics (to treat infections)
- Artificially administered Fluids and Nutrition
- Dialysis (substitute for normal kidney function to purify the blood)

How often should I review my Advanced Directives?

I would encourage you to review your Advanced Directives annually. As we grow older, diseases occur, etc, our thoughts change regarding our end of life wishes. This review gives *you* an opportunity to make changes to your Advanced Directives. Ensure that you share your changes with your Health Care Agent/Health Care Decision maker, so they are aware of your current desires for end of life decisions.

If you have any questions about Advanced Directives, need assistance with completing your Advanced Directives, or need Advanced Directive materials, please reach out to me at 410-596-0777 or gpcfcn@gettysburgpresbyterian.org

Missing my GPC family. Please stay safe!

“He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge” Psalms 91:4

