

Advanced Directives: Why, why now, and where to start?

So, a person decides to go on vacation. They pack their best shorts, sleeveless shirts, bathing suit, sandals. They have sunscreen. They want to go where there are palm trees and the water is a crystal blue. Can you picture it?

Now imagine they step off the plane and what's this? No palm trees. No crystal blue water. Not where they thought they were going at all. What if their travel agent decided for them without having the information because the person didn't share it with them?

There are crossroads in life that mirror this very scenario when a person cannot speak or share about healthcare decisions and goals for living life. Approximately 1 in 3 adults has an advanced directive or Practitioners Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment or POLST (Yadav, et al., 2017). Do you?

There are tools available to consider your life plans when it comes to the medical technology and scientific advances to sustain life. This information needs to be shared with a person who you would want to speak on your behalf if you couldn't speak for yourself.

This seems simple, but it is not easy. It may take time to consider your thoughts about such a challenging time. However, it can be completed only if you begin at the beginning. Join in making such healthcare and life goal decisions and then making your wishes known to someone you trust to know and be able to speak on your behalf.

April 16th is designated National Health Care Decision Day (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2021). This is a day to be inspired, to educate, and to empower ourselves and our communities about advanced care planning. Let's all go to the destination of our choosing!

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For more information:

Advance Directive <https://medlineplus.gov/advancedirectives.html>

NJ POLST <https://www.state.nj.us/health/advancedirective/polst/>

Prepare for Your Care (Advanced Directives) <https://prepareforyourcare.org/welcome>

References

Institute for Healthcare Improvement. (2021). The conversation project: National healthcare decision day-April 16. Retrieved from <https://theconversationproject.org/nhdd/>

Yadav, K., Gabler, N., Cooney, E., Kent, S., Kim, J., Herbst, N. Mante, A, Halpern, S., & Courtright, K. (2017). Approximately one in three US adults completes any type

of advanced directive for end-of-life care. Retrieved from
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0175>