

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with your Nurse, Physician or Lawyer.

Advance Directive packages are available at Renfrew Victoria Hospital in the Patient Resource Room.



Renfrew Victoria Hospital



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Adapted from The Ottawa Hospital

A GUIDE TO ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought about what would happen to you if you could not make medical care decisions for yourself? Who would make decisions for you? Would they know what you want? **Advance Care Planning** refers to planning for your future health care. It gives you the opportunity to think ahead and make decisions about treatments and procedures that you would want, or not want.

This is a topic that is sometimes difficult to think or talk about. It is important, however, that you be aware of advance care planning. It is important to make plans about your future health care and to make your plans known to your substitute decision maker. This booklet is a guide and we hope that it will help you and your family plan for your future health care.

In this booklet you will find:

- The definition and explanation of Advance Directives
- The definition and explanation of Power of Attorney
- Questions to help guide you when thinking or talking about advance care planning.

In addition to this booklet, you will receive a Power of Attorney form, Advance Care Planning Book, and forms regarding levels of care that can help guide you in deciding on treatments that you may or may not want.

Your nurse, social worker or doctor is available to go over these documents with you and try to answer any questions you may have. If you wish, you may ask to speak to a Chaplain about Advance Care Planning. Once you have read the booklet, we ask that you discuss your wishes with your family.

Do I need to complete my Power of Attorney for Personal Care with my lawyer?

You can, but you do not have to speak with a lawyer to appoint a power of attorney. However, you may want to speak to a lawyer or someone else to fully understand the process of appointing a POA.

Why should I complete a Power of Attorney for Personal Care?

Once a POA is complete, make it clear to family and friends who you have chosen to make decisions for you. If you do not choose a POA for personal care, should you become incapable of making health care decisions, a Substitute Decision Maker will be decided for you (according to the regulations set in the Health Care Consent Act). It is especially important for you to complete a POA if you are choosing to name a decision-maker who would not be legally recognized as your decision maker such as a friend or neighbor etc.

Questions to Consider for Advance Care Planning

- What information do you and your family need to feel confident and comfortable in making an informed decision for yourself?
- What values and beliefs are important to you?
- What are your feelings or thoughts toward death?
- What is the minimum quality of life acceptable to you?
- How do your spiritual beliefs affect your attitude about creating an advance directive?

POWER OF ATTORNEY

What is Power of Attorney?

A Power of Attorney (POA) is a legal document that allows you to appoint a person to make decisions for you if you become unable to make decisions for yourself. There are two types of POA, Power of Attorney for Property, and Power of Attorney for Personal Care. Your person identified under a POA for Property would make financial decisions for you, and your person identified under POA for Personal Care would make personal care decisions for you, including health care decisions. The following information will focus on POA for personal care, specifically health care decisions.

Who should I choose as my Power of Attorney for Personal Care?

You should choose a person you trust (spouse, family member, friend, etc.). This person should be willing to take the responsibility of making health care decisions for you if you are not able to make decisions for yourself. You may choose more than one person as your joint POA.

What should I consider when choosing a POA?

- Is the person willing to take on this job?
- Is the person trustworthy and responsible?
- Will the person respect your privacy and your wishes?

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

What are Advance Directives?

Your advance directives are a record of your medical wishes; they are sometimes referred to as a living will. It is a guide that can help direct your Substitute Decision Maker. Advance directives allow you to:

- Give direction in advance about what treatments you prefer in various situations
- Record your personal values about living and dying so others can better understand your directives

Why should you have advance directives?

1. Advance directives gives you a chance to think about your values and what treatments you would want if you become very ill and are not able to decide for yourself.
2. Advance directives help guide your decision maker. Advance directives may also take some of the stress away from your decision maker, as he/she will be guided by **your** wishes.

Who should you talk to about your advance directives?

Your Substitute Decision Maker should be aware of your wishes and have an understanding of your values and beliefs. Your Substitute Decision Maker should feel comfortable with your wishes and should be aware of the various treatments you may, or may not want. If your decision maker understands your directives it will be easier for him/her to accept and follow them.

Your health care team can help answer questions about advance care planning. Your doctors and nurses should be aware of your medical wishes and can help you understand and clarify some of the implications of your decisions.

Will the health care team help me decide whether or not I should start treatment?

Yes, the health care team will help guide you in your decision. You will meet with your doctor and nurse who will give you information on the various treatments available to you, including “no treatment”. The health care team will support you in your decision and encourage you to discuss your choice openly with your family and friends.

What should you talk about?

When you are discussing Advance Care Planning you should consider talking about:

- Resuscitation in the event of a cardiac arrest
- If, or when, you may want to stop treatment
- Other medical procedures

If you do not wish to have some of these treatments you must let your doctors know so they can write this in your medical record.

Can I change my advance directives?

Yes, you may change your advance directives at any time. You should review them regularly (every 6 months) or if your health condition changes. If you change your wishes, ensure that your decision maker and doctor are aware of the changes.

What happens to my written Advance Directives?

Your written advance directives are meant to aid in discussion with your Substitute Decision Maker. The key is that your Substitute Decision Maker is aware of your health care wishes. If you have previously completed an Advance Directives form, please let us know. You can ask for your Advance Directives to be placed on your chart. You need to know that it may not follow you. Therefore, you (or your substitute decision maker) will need to bring a copy if you are going to be admitted to the hospital.