

Advance Care Planning: Having a Conversation

Advanced care planning is an involved process by which a capable adult discusses their beliefs, values and wishes for future health care with their close family/friend(s) and health care provider(s) in advance of a time when they may be incapable of deciding themselves.

PREPARE to initiate a conversation

Explore your own feelings: *How might your own feelings affect your attitudes and behavior when discussing ACP with patients?*

Consider the environment: *ensure privacy and comfortable setting, set aside enough time, and prevent interruption*

Remember that this is a personal choice: *advance care planning should never be imposed on a person*

Allow space and time for reflection: *know that these conversations can take place over several visits*

Ask who else should be included in conversation

START and FACILITATE a conversation

<p>Don't Assume you understand. ASK.</p> <p>Everyone is a unique individual who is influenced by experience, life circumstances, family, society and a belief system. The choices in ACP will not just be based on medical options, risks and benefits, but on personal values like what makes life worth living.</p>	<p>Listen Carefully</p> <p><i>Pay close attention to what the person is saying or trying to say. This may be the very first time that someone has explored their feelings about what is most important to them in life and how they feel about death and dying.</i></p>	<p>Use effective communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid medical jargon • Do not use euphemisms • Be clear and direct • Don't talk too quickly & pause often • Repeat back to the person what you heard them say, ask them if you got it right or if you missed something important before moving on • Wrap up a conversation by summarizing. It provides an opening for the person to remember something else they meant to ask or to add or revise your summary of the outcomes.
<p>Explore understanding and feeling around illness</p> <p>You might start with these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps the best way to start this discussion is with how are you feeling right now? • What is the effect of this illness on your life? • What do you expect to happen down the road? • What is your understanding of your health? • What has your doctor told you about your medical condition? Can I help you develop a list of questions to clarify with your doctor? • What are your health concerns at present? • Do you know what you might expect as your condition progresses? 	<p>Explore Values and Beliefs about Quality of Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Have you ever discussed this with your family? Do they understand how you feel?" • What makes each day enjoyable to you? • What makes your life worth living? • What is most important to you? <p><i>Exploring values and beliefs about quality of life and dying well is part of the ACP conversation regardless of the person's health status</i></p>	<p>Seek assistance and information & expand the conversation to involve important others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who else should be part of this conversation? • If you weren't able to make health care decisions at some point in your life, do you have someone you would trust to speak for you? • Would that person be able to make difficult decisions on your behalf in times of stress? • Would that person respect your wishes even if they do not agree?
<p>Be aware of impact of culture and religion</p> <p><i>One of the most important pieces of advice in working cross-culturally is to be aware of how your own beliefs, values, and culture affect your attitudes and behavior.</i></p>	<p>DOCUMENT conversations and decisions in health record</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All discussion around ACP should be documented in the health record. These may include: • Decisions about goals of treatment (short term or long term) • Treatment plans <p>Revisit Individual Choices over time!</p>	<p><i>It is important to go into an ACP conversation without preconceived assumptions or predictions about what people will or should feel or believe. Don't assume how other people are feeling. Let them tell you.</i></p>