



Advance Care Planning

When many of us think about “preparing for the future”, we think about documents, such as a will, which give directions for dividing our property and assets. Just as important, we should think about and talk with our loved ones about medical treatments we would or would not want if we were unable to communicate for ourselves.

Advance Care Planning (ACP) is an ongoing process of learning about the choices we each have for our future medical care. It helps identify our individual wishes and values, for others to honor, in situations where we cannot communicate for ourselves.

The Advance Care Planning process includes:

- *Taking time to explore your thoughts and feelings about what is important to you to have a good quality of life*
- *Learning about medical treatment options and communicating your goals for treatment outcomes*
- *Discussing lifesaving or life-sustaining treatments, and how you feel about these options*
- *Choosing a Healthcare Proxy or Surrogate Decision Maker— someone who is very familiar with your preferences and will speak for you when you are unable*
- *Putting your wishes into writing*

Regardless of your current health status, making sure that your loved ones and healthcare providers know about your wishes and values is the best way to make sure these choices are honored. The ongoing process of conversations and documentation of your wishes and values for medical care serve as both a gift and protection for you and your family.

To assist you with the Advance Care Planning Process, we have included in this packet the following resources for you to review:

- *Values & Goals Information Sheet*
- *Values Assessment*
- *Healthcare Proxy Information Sheet*
- *Blank Alabama Advance Directive Form*

Thank you for helping us to better understand your values and preferences. We are open to discussing and revisiting this information with you at any time.

Your SCC Healthcare Team

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Patient Name:

MRN:

Date:

Values, Goals, and Advance Care Planning

Managing cancer or any serious illness can be overwhelming for patients, families, and caregivers. To provide you with the best care, we need to understand what matters most to you. Meeting with you to discuss your future care will help us to understand your goals and wishes. Please think about these questions as you prepare for a discussion with your provider:

- *What is your understanding of your illness?*
- *How much do you know about your illness? How would you like this information communicated with you (i.e., verbal, handouts, electronic, with someone present with you)?*
- *What fears and worries do you have about your illness?*
- *Do you feel that you have good support from family, friends, or others? How much do they know about your health and wishes?*
- *What gives your life its meaning & purpose?*
- *For you to have a good quality of life, what is most important to you? What gives you joy?*
- *What are your goals & priorities for the next few months?*
- *What will help you most to live well at this point in your life?*

If you have an advance directive or living will, please bring a copy with you. If not, please review the Values Assessment on the next page as you consider the options available to you.

A blank Alabama Advance Directive is included in this packet if you wish to complete it after making these decisions. If you need one for a different state, please let your healthcare team know and we can provide that for you.



Patient Name:
MRN:
Date:

Values Assessment

It is difficult to think about our own mortality, but Southern Cancer Center is here to help you think about this and provide information to assist you with these difficult conversations and decisions. It would be helpful for you and your family to consider the following when developing your personal advance care plan.

How valuable is it to me to...	Important	Uncertain	Not Important
Have freedom from pain, even if takes strong medications (which could impair ability to think clearly or even sedate me) to bring about acceptable relief?			
Be able to sleep well and wake up feeling rested?			
Be able to move about freely with little or no dependence on others or supportive equipment?			
Be able to express my sexuality with my partner in a way that is pleasing to me			
Know that I am not a burden to my family, friends, or helpers?			
Choose who will make medical decisions for me if I am unable to make decisions for myself?			
Choose where my medical care occurs when I am nearing end of life (i.e., At home, in the hospital, etc.)?			
Have nutritional intake, even if I am unable to eat by chewing and swallowing (i.e., feeding through a tube)?			
Be able to get deep breaths, even if I require help from a breathing machine (i.e., mechanical ventilation or life support)?			
Be told by a physician when I am nearing end of life?			

If you already know the answers to these questions, please mark them below:

Code Status: **Full Code** **Do Not Resuscitate**

Healthcare Decision Maker/Healthcare Proxy (more information about this is included in this packet):

Name

Relationship to you

Phone #



Facts About Choosing and Being a Healthcare Proxy or Surrogate Decision Maker

A healthcare proxy, or surrogate decision maker, is someone a patient chooses to make medical decisions in the event the patient is unable to make decisions for them self. The surrogate should be someone the patient trusts, and someone who understands the patient's medical situation and medical preferences.

How does someone begin the process of selecting a healthcare surrogate?

Things to think about:

- Are there people you know who share your cultural and religious or spiritual views?
- Are these people good listeners and communicators?
- Are you comfortable talking to these individuals about your personal health?
- Are they willing to learn as much as possible about your wishes, goals and values for medical care?
- Are they comfortable asking your physicians and family questions, even if the conversations are difficult?
- Can they stay calm in a crisis?

What are the responsibilities of a healthcare surrogate?

The healthcare surrogate should know and understand your current health status and expected outlook (prognosis). They may need to be assertive and ask questions. Consider asking your surrogate to come to doctor visits with you to get to know your doctors. Your healthcare surrogate must clearly understand the goals of your treatment plan, including the benefits and burdens of treatment and no treatment. There may be unexpected events that require quick decision making. The surrogate may need to make choices about your care in situations you weren't expecting.

The healthcare surrogate knows the patient's wishes regarding medical treatments.



What does my healthcare surrogate need to know?

You should communicate to your surrogate what it means for you to have acceptable quality of life.

Discuss what medical treatments you do and do not want. Because your views may change, plan to have a series of conversations over time. It may be hard to anticipate every healthcare situation possible but speaking openly helps to clarify what you want and gives your surrogate confidence that they are doing the right thing for you. Asking the following questions can help start the process:

1. What medical treatments do you want to receive or refuse?
2. Would you want to have a feeding tube or receive intravenous (IV) feeding to maintain nutrition (food) and hydration (fluid)?
3. If your heart stops beating, is Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) something you would want? Do you clearly understand what CPR means and what your outcome may be if you have CPR?
4. How do you feel about being on a machine that breathes for you (artificial ventilation)?
5. If you develop a serious infection, would you want to receive antibiotics?
6. Would you want these treatments on a limited time trial basis? What changes in your health situation would make you want to continue or stop treatment?

What does healthcare advocacy in action look like?

The healthcare surrogate is the patient's advocate and knows the patient's wishes regarding medical treatments. They can make decisions in situations the patient might not have thought about, putting the patient's best interests first. The surrogate can speak with physicians about the patient's changing medical condition. Most importantly, the surrogate can take steps to ensure that the patient's medical choices are honored.

References

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