



Hospice of the Calumet Area NEWS

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Hospice Community Disappointed in Administration's Decision and Reminds All Americans of the Value of Advance Care Planning

(Alexandria, VA) – “We are surprised that the Administration has decided to reverse the decision to include voluntary advance care planning consultations as part of a Medicare beneficiaries’ annual wellness exam,” remarked J. Donald Schumacher, president and CEO of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

Despite this action, NHPCO strongly encourages all Americans to think about their wishes for care at the end of life and engage in advance care planning. This includes having discussions with healthcare providers and family members, completing an advance directive (which includes a living will and healthcare proxy), and making sure their loved ones understand their wishes.

“Frankly, we are somewhat disappointed that the regulatory guideline making this part of the annual Medicare exam and compensating the physician for taking time to talk about personal preferences has become such a political issue,” continued Schumacher. “It’s simply about educating patients about the types of decisions they might need to consider in future healthcare situations, and then supporting them as they make their own choices based on their values, beliefs and preferences.”

The opportunity for this voluntary consultation with a physician has been part of the “welcome to Medicare” exam since 2008.

Research has shown that patients who discuss their care options when facing a serious or life-limiting illness report a higher quality of life, less hospitalizations and fewer visits to the emergency department. Family caregivers have also been shown to benefit from discussions held between physicians and patients.

Far too often, patients and their families are forced to make decisions in times of crisis; these voluntary advance care planning consultations would have facilitated informed conversations prior to the onset of an illness or medical crisis.

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“Death and dying can be a difficult topic for people to deal with – this includes politicians crafting legislation, healthcare providers caring for patients, and people who may be confronting a serious illness. But as hard as this can be, it’s far

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Mission Statement

Hospice of the Calumet Area, a not-for-profit hospice, is dedicated to improving the quality of life through compassionate care for individuals and families facing an end-of-life illness.

more difficult for a patient and family to face a medical crisis without a prior understanding of an individual's wishes and how quality of life might be addressed. Knowing a loved one has engaged in discussions with a knowledgeable physician can bring comfort to patients and families—and that can be quite a gift at a challenging time,” Schumacher said. “Having this option spelled out in Medicare regulations would have raised awareness of advance care planning and potentially opened the door for valuable conversations.”

NHPCO emphasizes that advance care planning is not about discontinuing treatment, saving money, or having someone else make decisions for you; it's about making sure your wishes are known and then honored, regardless of whether you choose every medical intervention available, discontinue non-productive treatments, or something in between.

There is concern among hospice providers that the debate about this regulation and last year's “death panel” rumors will cause additional confusion to members of the public and make them even more suspicious of advance care planning. Hospice and palliative care providers are skilled in helping people understand issues of importance when facing a serious or life-limiting illness and can be important resources for those looking to learn more or make their wishes known.

NHPCO's Caring Connections offers information on care at the end of life and provides free, state-specific living will and healthcare proxy forms: Visit www.CaringInfo.org,

Information to help patients and family caregivers understand the benefits of hospice care is available at: www.HospiceCalumet.org or 219-922-2732, 708-895-8332 or 219-736-2422.



**NATIONAL HEALTHCARE
DECISIONS DAY**
★ *your decisions matter* ★

Hospice of the Calumet Area will present facts to consider when completing an advance directive. There will also be notaries present to assist you in completing your own advance directive should

you choose to complete it at the event. This program is free and open to the public. Mark your calendar for **Thursday, April 14th**. Call Susie at 219-922-2732 for time and location.

Reminder:

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has clarified that physicians must sign **and date** hospice certifications, home health plans of care, verbal orders and certifications. A date stamp will no longer be accepted. This change is effective for all documents signed on or after January 1, 2011.

*To make a referral or request an informational visit, please call
Hospice of the Calumet Area
at (219) 922-2732,
(708) 895-8332 or (219) 736-2422.*