**Health & Wellness Committee Tip of the Month**

**Why You Need an Advance Directive, and Why Now is the Time**

The most expensive medical treatments are those we don’t want.

If you had a serious illness or accident, and were unable to speak for yourself, would your loved ones know your wishes for care?

National Healthcare Decisions Day in April offers an opportunity to start having the conversations most of us are not having. The occasion aims to help people across the United States understand the value of advance healthcare planning. And for 2017, National Healthcare Decisions Day will be a weeklong event, from April 16 to 22.

A good place to begin advance care planning conversations is to complete an advance directive, and give copies to your loved ones, doctor and your hospital. You can fill out and print an advance directive from this link: <http://www.providence.org/-/media/files/ihc/advance-directive.pdf?la=en>

Most of us have strong feelings about care through the end of life and how we want to die. But most of us also have not discussed our wishes with our doctors or loved ones. That means we may not receive the care we want at the end of our lives.

Advance directives allow you to appoint a person to represent your health care wishes if you are unable to speak for yourself.

A willingness to talk about illness, caregiving, dying and grieving can lead to much better end-of-life care. Here are some statistics to help get the conversation started:

**90%** of Americans think it’s important to talk about wishes for care through the end of life.[1](http://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/23/Quick_Safety_Issue_Fifteen_July_20151.PDF)

**30%** actually speak with a loved one about wishes for treatment and care.[2](http://theconversationproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/TCP-Survey-Release_FINAL-9-18-13.pdf)

**82%** of people say it’s important to put their wishes for treatment and care in writing.[3](http://www.chcf.org/publications/2012/02/final-chapter-death-dying)

**23%** have actually put their wishes for treatment and care in writing.[3](http://www.chcf.org/publications/2012/02/final-chapter-death-dying)

**100%** of us will eventually die.

*Contributed by Ira Byock, MD, founder and medical director, Providence Institute for Human Caring*

1. <http://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/23/Quick_Safety_Issue_Fifteen_July_20151.PDF>
2. <http://theconversationproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/TCP-Survey-Release_FINAL-9-18-13.pdf>
3. <http://www.chcf.org/publications/2012/02/final-chapter-death-dying>