Revisiting Advance Directive Planning from a Holistic Perspective

Abstract: End-of-life decision making has become more prominent in ethical debates as both the aging populations increases and medical technologies advance. These factors provoke questions concerning treatment options, quality of life, and the natural dying process. Such factors and concerns highlight the importance of accurate and authentic advanced directive planning. In this presentation, it will be argued that current advanced directive planning lacks an adequate framework to promote a fruitful conversation about end-of-life decisions. This will be supported by first presenting the intention of advanced directives. There will then be an assessment of the current advanced directive methods in light of this intention. Thereafter, an alternative approach will be presented which emphasizes the importance of a multidisciplinary holistic advanced directive. This approach is argued to achieve the true intentions of advanced directives by promoting decision making conversations unique to each individual. Successful advanced directive planning conversations should be initiated earlier, the focus of an annual appointment, and be considered from a multidisciplinary perspective.