

POLST

physician orders for life-sustaining treatment paradigm

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Although summer might be nearing an end, the momentum started in June with the **landmark POLST study** isn't! It's wonderful to see this manuscript still being featured in new publications and reports. We are expecting additional media coverage pending the release of the Institute of Medicine Committee on Approaching Death: Addressing Key End of Life Issues, as POLST was presented in two of the three public meetings. The National POLST Office and some National POLST Paradigm Task Force members have also been contacted by the television news program 60 Minutes for a potential end-of-life story. I'll keep you posted!



As a reminder, the National POLST Office and the National POLST Paradigm Task Force are available to assist if you have any questions about how to manage your media strategy, prepare for interviews or craft answers to questions from the media - just shoot us an **email** and we'll help!

I appreciate all your efforts to advocate for the appropriate use of POLST, helping more patients and families have the ability to use POLST Forms to document their treatment wishes. Keep up the good work!

Best wishes,

Amy Vandenbroucke, JD

Executive Director

News

Save the Date for October's Webinar

On October 20th, from 12:00 pm -

FEATURED NEWS

Reimbursement for Advance Care Planning Gaining Traction

The **New York Times** recently published an article on the changing attitude toward reimbursement for advance care planning

1:00 pm Pacific Time, the National POLST Office will host a webinar titled "Discussing POLST with Persons with Early Alzheimer's Disease." The webinar will be led by Ken Brummel-Smith, MD, who will help participants think about the special challenges of having POLST conversations with patients with early onset dementia.

To register for the webinar, [click here](#).

New Videos from the Oregon POLST Program

The Oregon POLST Program and the Oregon POLST Registry have each recently released new informational videos. The Oregon POLST Program released a video titled "[Understanding POLST](#)", which provides just-in-time education to patients and their families.

The Oregon POLST Registry released a [video](#) that explains the importance of the POLST Registry, particularly for ensuring that patient wishes are readily available across care settings.

POLST Featured in Medical Ethics Advisor

The August issue of Medical Ethics Advisor featured an article on the [POLST study](#) published in the June issue of the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. The article featured interviews with the NPPTF's Susan Tolle, an author of the study, as well as NPPTF members Pat Bomba and Susan Hickman.

conversations. Currently, the lack of reimbursement has been a major disincentive for health care professionals to engage in advance care planning conversations with their patients. However, the tide is beginning to shift. Insurance companies have begun to independently reimburse for advance care planning conversations. Notably, the article mentions NPPTF board member Pat Bomba, the medical director at Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield of New York, who has worked to have reimbursement covered.

Most importantly, the article highlights the potential for Medicare to cover conversations about the end of life. The American Medical Association (AMA) has recommended that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) establish a billing code for advance care planning conversations, and CMS often follows AMA recommendations. If Medicare begins reimbursement for advance care planning, many patients would gain access to important conversations about their values, wishes, and goals of care.

The foundation for POLST and all advance care planning is high-quality conversations between a patient and health care professional. This article demonstrates the fundamental importance of reimbursing these conversations to help ensure that patients can communicate their wishes.

To read the full article, [click here](#).

FEATURED RESOURCE

PREPARE Advance Care Planning Education Aid

A website designed by faculty from University of California - San Francisco helps patients and their families engage in advance care planning. [PREPARE](#) is a step-by-step decision aid that highlights 5 major steps in advance care planning: choosing a medical decision maker, deciding what's most important, determining how much flexibility to give a medical decision maker, sharing wishes, and asking a physician the right questions.

For each step, the tool explains why the step is important, what needs to be done, and how to move forward. The website is designed for those with no medical training and is simple enough even for those who are not computer savvy.

PREPARE helps educate patients before they begin an advance care planning conversation and seeks to build decision making skills that can be utilized in the future.

To learn more about the tool, visit www.prepareforyourcare.org

FEATURED RESEARCH

Decision Aids for Advance Care Planning

A review article published in the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#) explores the effectiveness of decision aids for advance care planning. The authors conducted a systematic review of studies that evaluated either general advance care planning decision aids or decision aids for specific diagnoses. They described and compared those aids based on criteria set by the International Patient Decision Aids Standards (IPDAS) Collaboration.

Notably, most decision aids are not evaluated in the scientific literature. The investigators only found 16 studies - 9 randomized controlled trials and 7 case series - that evaluated decision aids.

Only eleven unique decision aids were represented in the literature, including self-directed computer programs, videos, disease progression statistics, and a structured interview.

The authors discovered that the outcomes of most studies of decision aids focused on patient satisfaction and patient knowledge of advance directives or disease processes. However, many fewer studies explored whether decision aids improved confidence in decision making, led to wishes being honored at the end of life, or encouraged patients to revisit their choices at a later time.

The researchers found that general decision aids provided patients with less information than decision aids for specific conditions and were less helpful to patients. One important exception was the **PREPARE** website (see Featured Resource above). Overall, however, there was very limited evidence that demonstrated improved outcomes for patients using decision aids.

The article demonstrates that the science on decision aids is limited and that more decision aids must be subjected to rigorous study. Only with a firm evidence base can patients be directed to the decision aids that will best prepare them to make decisions about their future care.

To read the full article, click here:

Butler, M, E Ratner, E McCreedy, N Shippee, and RL Kane(2014). "Decision Aids for Advance Care Planning: An Overview of the State of the Science" Annals of Internal Medicine, accessed 8/21/2014 at <http://annals.org/article.aspx?articleid=1891307>.

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