

# POLST

*physician orders for life-sustaining treatment paradigm*

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Dear Friends,

This fall will be full of new opportunities to learn about and share the National POLST Paradigm. Next month, we will hear from Oregon POLST Leaders who will share their experience implementing an ePOLST system. Then, in November, Ken Brummel-Smith will be presenting his webinar on POLST and dementia for the third time due to popular demand. Alongside these talks, I will be presenting the new communications strategy created by the National POLST Paradigm Task Force (NPPTF) to state POLST leaders. This strategy will help guide how we discuss, share, and advocate for POLST in the future. Finally, we will be releasing new POLST materials, including an updated POLST Legislative Grid, a frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) document, and a white paper distinguishing POLST from Death With Dignity.



I encourage you to take advantage of as many of these opportunities as possible. These chances for learning and sharing are essential for improving the POLST Paradigm and helping more patients with serious illness and frailty. I am excited to see what we can accomplish as we deepen our knowledge of POLST and the end of life.

Best wishes,

Amy Vandenbroucke, JD  
Executive Director

## Our News

## FEATURED NEWS

## California POLST Legislation

In August, California Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation expanding signing privileges for **California POLST** Forms to Physician Assistants (PAs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs). Allowing these health care professionals to sign POLST Forms increases access to POLST for patients with serious illness and frailty.

To learn more about the legislation, [click here](#).

## Illinois POLST Legislation

In August, Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner signed legislation that renames the Illinois Uniform POLST/DNR Form as the **Illinois POLST** Form. This legislation will reduce confusion about the content of the Form since the POLST Form contains treatment preferences beyond resuscitation and allows patients to choose either to receive *or* avoid treatment.

Congratulations to all those who worked to make this possible!

## Webinar: Oregon's ePOLST Experience

On October 20th, from 12 - 1 pm Pacific Time, the National POLST Office will host a webinar on Oregon's ePOLST Experience. The webinar will be presented by representatives of the Oregon POLST Registry, Oregon Health and Science University Information Technology Group, Epic, and technology firm Vynca.

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

## The John A. Hartford Foundation Blog Highlights POLST

The John A. Hartford Foundation blog **recently highlighted** an NPR article on Medicare reimbursement for advance care planning that featured POLST. The blog post also recognized

## Fostering the Conversation

Last week, the National POLST Paradigm Task Force (NPPTF) sent a **letter** to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in support of the **proposal to add billing codes to reimburse health care professionals** for advance care planning. The NPPTF supports the proposal because it will help ensure that patients are able to have thorough and detailed conversations about their treatment wishes with their health care professional. As the letter states, "Compensating health care professionals for time spent in valuable conversations with their patients to discuss goals of care and treatment wishes is a critical step forward to honoring patient treatment preferences, particularly those nearing the end of life."

We encourage state POLST Programs and individuals to send their own letters of support to CMS. On August 24th, state POLST contacts were sent a draft letter of support that they can choose to send to CMS and distribute to individuals. Contact your **state POLST contact** to obtain this draft letter of support. The public comment period is only open until 5 pm Eastern Time on September 8th, so be sure to send in your letter of support before then!

Also emphasizing the importance of the conversation is a Pew Charitable Trusts fact sheet titled "The Case for Advance Care Planning". The fact sheet underscores the fact that many individuals wanted to have the conversation, but had never discussed their wishes with a health care professional. Furthermore, it highlights the barriers to having the conversation, including the current lack of reimbursement for advance care planning activities. This fact sheet is valuable for quickly communicating the importance of encouraging advance care planning conversations.

To take a look at the NPPTF letter to CMS, [click here](#). To read the Pew Charitable Trusts fact sheet, [click here](#).

## FEATURED RESOURCE

### The Role of Guardians and Health Care Agents in Medical Decision-Making

The August issue of the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Law and Aging's journal, **BiFocal**, features an important article on the role of guardians and health care agents in medical decision-making. The article updates a 2003 BiFocal article exploring whether a guardian or health care agent would have decision-making power if both were appointed. In the current article, the author explains that almost all states have created legislation that gives either health care agents or guardians final decision-making power for health care treatment decisions. However, in the case where power is given to the guardian, there is concern that the guardian does not have to honor the treatment wishes of an individual. As a result, the author notes that there is

NPPTF Executive Director Amy Vandembroucke, who is a **Hartford Change AGent**.

Thank you to **The John A. Hartford Foundation** for helping spread the word about POLST!

## 2016 National POLST Paradigm Conference

The 2016 National POLST Paradigm Conference will be titled "The Future of POLST: Challenges and Opportunities". The Conference is scheduled for February 3-5 in Chicago, IL at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. We anticipate the conference will start at 2 pm on February 3rd and end at 3 pm on February 5th.

To reserve hotel rooms for the conference, [click here](#).

Keep an eye out for registration details for the conference, which will be available early this fall.

a need for additional statutes that will protect a patient's wishes even when under guardianship.

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

## Featured Research

### POLST Among Patients with Parkinson's Disease

A forthcoming article in the journal **Parkinsonism and Related Disorders** explores the orders on a POLST Form and the location of death for patients with Parkinson's Disease (PD) compared to patients without PD. To do so, the authors analyzed death records from Oregon decedents in 2010-2011. They then matched this data with POLST Forms from the Oregon POLST Registry.

The authors found that there was no significant difference in the POLST orders between patients with PD and those without PD. However, they did identify a significant difference in location of death. Patients with PD were significantly less likely to die at home than patients without PD. Yet, the authors found that the presence of POLST Form mitigated this difference. Patients with PD and a POLST Form were significantly more likely to die at home than patients with PD but without a POLST Form. Furthermore, patients who elected "Comfort Measures Only" on their POLST Form were even more likely to die at home.

These data indicate that POLST Forms are an important tool for patients with PD to express their treatment wishes and suggest that POLST Forms play a significant role in the location of death for patients with PD.

\*\* Because of copyright restrictions we cannot provide a copy of the article upon request but options to obtain it are listed on the site below. \*\*

**Tuck, KK, DM Zive, TA Schmidt, J Carter, J Nutt, and EK Fromme (2015). "Life-Sustaining Treatment Orders, Location of Death and Co-Morbid Conditions in Decedents with Parkinson's Disease". Parkinsonism and Related Disorders, accessed 8/31/2015 at [http://www.jpsmjournal.com/article/S0885-3924\(15\)00321-8/abstract](http://www.jpsmjournal.com/article/S0885-3924(15)00321-8/abstract)**

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