

Advance Care Planning Situational Quiz

M1-1. Mrs. Lanzini is a 68-year-old widow with 4 living adult children who has advanced congestive heart failure, New York Heart Association class IV, despite optimal afterload reduction and diuretic therapy. During an office visit, after a full discussion, she indicates that she would like her priest to make medical decisions for her in accordance with Catholic doctrine in the event she cannot make decisions for herself. The best advice you should give her is to:

- a. write a letter to the doctor indicating her wishes
- b. complete a statutory living will
- c. complete a Statutory Power of Attorney for Health Affairs
- d. choose one of her children to make decision for her

Answer: c

The question is aimed at determining knowledge. The only legally recognized way that the patient can authorize someone to make medical decisions for her, other than her legal next of kin, is through the Statutory Power of Attorney for Health Affairs. A letter to the doctor would support this choice, and help the physician determine if the power of attorney were acting in her best interests. In most states, a Living Will is only operative if it is determined that she has a terminal illness and is unable to make decisions. She has the ability to choose anyone she wants as an agent; there is no need to choose her child.

M1-2. Mr. Robinson is a 34-year-old pipe fitter who has been admitted with liver failure secondary to hepatitis. He lacks capacity to make decisions for himself. He has not indicated any prior wishes or completed any advance directive form. The physician is best guided by:

- a. duty to prolong life at all cost
- b. medical judgment about what is best
- c. state law governing substituted judgment
- d. the family's wishes even though the physician suspects selfish motives

Answer: c

This question is aimed at the issue of substituted judgment in the absence of written advance directives. Laws governing who makes decisions for the patient in the absence of clear evidence about what the patient wanted vary from state to state. Many, but not all, recognize "next of kin" in the absence of written directives. Although medical judgment is important, it is advisory to the person who has the authority to speak for the patient. This is determined by state law. The family is not always the best decision maker.

M1-3. Miss Monadnock is a 93-year-old former waitress with osteoarthritis, hypertension, and a prolapsed mitral valve. She completed a Living Will and named her niece as her power of attorney for health affairs some time ago. She was hospitalized for pneumonia, 3 months ago. In accordance with her wishes, she was intubated for 5 days and had an extended period of recovery. She is again living alone in her own home. On what occasion(s) should her plans be revisited?

- a. at the next suitable office visit
- b. when the patient develops moderate atrial fibrillation
- c. neither
- d. both

Answer: d

This question is aimed at understanding how advance care planning should be woven throughout a care plan. Appropriate times to review advance directives are both when things are going well (particularly after a major health care event) and with new developments. They shouldn't be accomplished once and never reviewed again.

M1-4. Mr Arteresian is an 84-year-old retired judge recently discharged from the hospital for evaluation of syncope. He completed a Living Will and named his son as his power of attorney for property and health affairs. In the office, he says he would also like to make plans about his funeral and wants to arrange for his body to go to the medical school. Your best response is to:

- a. tell him to talk to his son
- b. note this is the medical record
- c. both of the above
- d. neither of the above

Answer: c

This question is aimed at the larger sphere of advance planning that is appropriate for patients with advanced disease. His son, as power of attorney for property, will be responsible for his father's affairs after death, including disposition of his body. The information that the son is power of attorney for health affairs and property as well as the father's wishes is useful in the medical record both to ensure that the power of attorney acts in accordance with the patient's best interests and to ensure continuity and communication.