Study: Advance directives work for patients and providers

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There's new proof that advance directives help patients get the care they want — and ease the burden on health care providers. A new study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society shows that elderly and ill patients with advanced directives about their care have fewer unwanted hospitalizations.

The study looked at patients using the POLST form — for Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment. The form gives patients an easy way to indicate their wishes about a variety of treatments — such as the use of ventilation or feeding tubes — and it's signed by both the patient and the doctor.

Patients in the study who used the PLOST form had their wishes regarding resuscitation followed 98% of the time. Their preferences regarding limited medical interventions were followed just slightly more than 91% of the time.

About 24% of the patients refined their orders as the end of their lives approached — most patients opted for more comfort-focused care.

The use of the forms has faced some criticism from activists who think patients should always be given treatment to prolong life at any cost.

Source: HealthExecNews.com, http://healthexecnews.com/study-advanced-directives-work-for-patients-and-providers#more-4761