
Legal, Ethical, Professional Issues: Advance Directives

Directions: Divide into groups of four to five. Give each group the same situation. As each group completes the primary situation, change the fact pattern as directed in the activity.

Situation:

JT is a 24 year-old patient with end-stage cystic fibrosis who was admitted to the medical floor with pneumonia. He is quite clear in communicating that he has an advance directive that indicates no intubation. His mother is identified as the person to make decisions if he is unable to make them for himself.

JT's condition worsens during the night and he has extreme difficulty in breathing, but remains alert.

The physician tells him that he is deteriorating rapidly and needs to be intubated. JT refuses.

The mother has been notified of his condition, arrives at the hospital and directs the physician to intubate JT.

Instructions: Change the facts to provide relevance in the situation.

- In the field for paramedics
- In the ER for EMT's
- In the X-ray department, change the facts so that he has a cardio-respiratory arrest
- In the Dental Clinic

- Change his level of consciousness to confused or unresponsive

- Change the setting to home

Discussion Guidelines: Legal, Ethical, Professional Issues: Advance Directives

The basic principle in this situation is one of Patient Rights. (See page 53 – Objective 9). The importance of the situation in classroom is to have an open discussion of values, assumptions and biases and therefore can be used to facilitate critical thinking. It is important for the facilitator to emphasize the legal principle, but be non-judgmental with student responses. Differences in cultural background and religious views will become apparent in the discussion.

Situation:

JT is a 24 year-old patient with end-stage cystic fibrosis who was admitted to the medical floor with pneumonia. He is quite clear in communicating that he has an advance directive that indicates no intubation. His mother is identified as the person to make decisions if he is unable to make them for himself.

On admission the staff should verify the presence of Advance Directives. If the Advance Directives are not available, the patient has a right to sign them at that time.

JT's condition worsens during the night and he has extreme difficulty in breathing, but remains alert. The physician tells him that he is deteriorating rapidly and needs to be intubated. JT refuses. The mother has been notified of his condition, arrives at the hospital and directs the physician to intubate JT.

(See page 53-Objective 9-B.3)

Instructions: Change the facts to provide relevance in the situation.

- In the field for paramedics
- In the ER for EMT's
- In the X-ray department, change the facts so that he has a cardio-respiratory arrest
- In the Dental Clinic

Given that the patient is alert and his Advance Directives are known, the staff may not intubate the patient.

- Change his level of consciousness to confused or unresponsive

If the patient is confused or unresponsive and Advance Directives cannot be verified, then the staff must proceed per family's direction as the patient is unable to make decisions for himself. However, if Advance Directives are in place, they must be followed.

- Change the setting to home

The same principles apply throughout the situations.