

Increasing the uptake of advance care directives through staff education and one-on-one support for people facing end-of-life.

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Publisher

BMJ Publishing Group

Source

Medline

Publication name

BMJ open quality

Volume

13

Issue

4

Language(s)

English

Subject(s)

Advance Directives, Health Equity, Palliative Care

Publication location

England

Date

2024/11/02

pmid

39488435

doi

10.1136/bmjopen-2023-002727

Description / abstract

BACKGROUNDAn advance care plan outlines a patient's wishes regarding medical treatment or goals of care in the case that they become unable to communicate or to make decisions. An advance care directive (ACD) is an advance care plan that has been formally recorded and has legal status. Despite ACDs playing an important role in person-centred end-of-life care, an earlier retrospective medical records audit demonstrated that only 11% (58/531) of people who died due to a terminal illness had an ACD. The aim of this project was to increase the proportion of patients with a terminal illness completing an ACD. A secondary outcome was to measure the impact of

ACDs on hospital and intensive care unit (ICU) admissions in the last 6 months of life. This multifaceted project comprised (1) education for health professionals and the public; (2) individual support for patients on request; (3) development of online resources for health professionals and the general public; and (4) monthly team meetings. **METHOD** The proportion of ACDs completed and hospital and ICU admissions during the last 6 months of life, were extracted via medical record audits. Written consent was required for patients to participate, including being contacted by the project team and accessing their medical records. **RESULTS** 112 patients consented to participate in the project and 109 (97%) completed an ACD. There was no reduction in the average number of hospital admissions, while ICU admissions reduced from 14% (n=74) to 0%. **CONCLUSION** The targeted, multifaceted approach to education and support for completion of ACDs, resulted in a significant increase in ACD completion and a major reduction in ICU admissions.