



Advance Care Planning Decisions

CASE STUDY

**Saint Agnes Heart
Failure Center**



Saint Agnes Heart Failure Center Implements ACP Decisions Video Decision Aids to Improve Delivery of Advance Care Planning



BACKGROUND

Saint Agnes Healthcare, part of Ascension, the largest nonprofit health system in the U.S. and the world's largest Catholic health system, is committed to serving the health needs of the Greater Baltimore community. Cardiovascular disease is a major health issue within this diverse community and the Saint Agnes Heart Failure Center (HFC) was designed to help those patients in need.

HFC is a high acuity, multidisciplinary outpatient clinic that provides ongoing, individualized care for patients diagnosed with heart failure. Led by three nurse practitioners, the care team includes a medical director, heart failure nurses, a COPD nurse practitioner, a nurse navigator, respiratory therapist, medical assistant, social worker and chaplain. The clinic sees about 12 patients per day and spends a significant amount of time with each patient and their family members educating, listening to concerns, helping with medications, and counseling on dietary and other lifestyle changes.

CHALLENGE

According to the CDC, about half of people who develop heart failure die within 5 years of diagnosis. This sobering statistic impacts the conversations healthcare providers must have with their patients dealing with serious illness. At HFC, advance care planning and advance directives are essential components of integrating their patients' voices into care planning. However, these conversations

can be difficult to have from both the perspective of the patient and family as well as the healthcare provider.

In 2015, a review of the medical records of all patients seen in the clinic over the previous year revealed that only about 15% had a living will or advance directive completed and easily accessed in the health record. The HFC team felt this rate was far too low. An evaluation of advance care and end-of-life planning led the HFC staff to identify a critical area of need: improved skills and resources to **help their high acuity patient population understand their options, express their preferences, and participate in healthcare decisions.**

Key Benefits to ACP Decisions Videos

-  Evidence-based solution
-  Increases staff comfort and confidence
-  Improves efficiency of advanced care planning
-  Addresses issues of low health literacy
-  Enhances patient understanding of options

SOLUTION

The Search

Initially, the clinic tried hosting the Saint Agnes palliative care team to do advance care planning for the patients, but staffing and scheduling were a challenge. The clinic also invited a local hospice to hold a “*Courageous Conversations*” training for the staff. But more needed to be done.

While attending a national hospice and palliative medicine conference, the provider team learned about the ACP Decisions video series. **The ACP Decisions extensive video library is designed to enhance shared decision-making and help patients make better informed decisions.** While ACP Decisions was not attending the conference, multiple professionals, including vendors, recommended their video decision aids to the HFC group.



The Decision

After looking online at the ACP Decisions website, Jae Patton, RN, MSN, CRNP, Nurse Practitioner Supervisor at HFC, says she and her team felt “the videos are well-produced and brief, and the content would be accessible to most of the patients in our clinic, even those with poor health literacy. **Most importantly, we liked that there is a significant amount of data published in well-respected medical journals that supports the efficacy of using the videos** to positively impact patients’ understanding of goals of care and code status.”

Sister Louise Busby, Chaplain of the unit and part of the multidisciplinary team, was a big proponent of using the video series after she reviewed it. “I felt it was important to bring them on board to assist our patients, to have some familiarity with what their conditions are, and by hearing

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– Sister Louise Busby, Chaplain, St. Agnes Healthcare

it in the voice of another person — speaking as if they’d gone through that experience — patients could make a connection to their own experience,” she says.

The Implementation

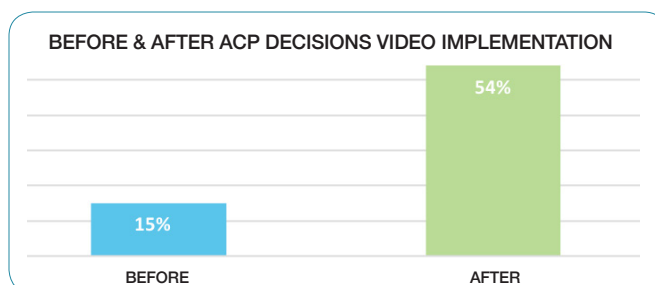
With support from the Saint Agnes Foundation, the HFC team received funding, and began work with ACP Decisions to implement the relevant videos into the clinic’s processes and work-flow. **“The Heart Failure Center staff really embraced this project and came together as a team** to improve our care of heart failure patients around advance directives and end-of-life planning and care,” says Jae.

The team set 2 goals: 1) Show videos to 70% of all patients seen at least three times and; **2)** Have 50% of these patients complete advance directives.

RESULTS

Increased Rate of Advance Directive Completion

Since the implementation of the ACP Decisions video series, the clinic has seen a significant increase in the completion rate of advance directives: **54.2%** of all patients have completed advance directives that are documented in the Saint Agnes EHR system, up from **15%** prior to implementation. Of the patients who have viewed the videos, **67%** now have advance directives.



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Heart Failure Center

Better Patient Accessibility

Health literacy is a key factor. “I think they’re well done, because they’re plain and clear in the language,” says Sister Louise, “a person who has a sixth-grade level can understand them quite well.”

Based on a patient’s health literacy, individual concerns, and communication skills, the **providers were able to tailor their delivery of advance care planning according to the specific needs of patients** by choosing the most relevant videos.

“Watching a video also gives patients a break from the dialogue — giving them a chance to absorb and really visualize information,” says Jae.

More Efficient Process

The entire process of advance care planning was made more efficient by integrating the care and use of the videos into the daily work-flow.

The advance care planning care was built into the documentation. The nurse practitioner can document goals-of-care conversations in the narrative section of the Assessment and Plan. Also, **two structured data** fields were added to the system to help the team easily determine who needs an advance care planning discussion: **1)** whether the patient has seen a video, and **2)** whether the patient has an advance directive.

A review of advance care planning was also added to **morning multidisciplinary rounds** to help identify patients who should receive that care.

In general, **the videos were easily incorporated into the patient visit**. As Jae points out, “We do a lot of teaching as part of our appointments, and because the videos are brief, the nurse practitioners can show them while finishing up discharge paper work.” The presence of the nurse practitioner allows the patient to watch the videos while having someone nearby to offer support and answer questions as needed.

Facilitated Conversations

Overall, **the videos helped the clinic providers improve their skills with end-of-life conversations**, and they have found these conversations easier to initiate and have.

Improved efficiency
when the Saint
Agnes staff:



1.

Utilized data analytics to identify who needed a discussion




2.

Reviewed ACP status during morning multidisciplinary rounds



3.

Incorporated videos as part of the 3rd clinic visit

67%

Of the patients who have viewed the videos, 67% now have advance directives.

The initiation of a discussion was facilitated by normalizing the experience and including the **Advance Directives** video on a patient's third visit, if possible. The providers communicated a clinic philosophy that everyone, including the staff, should have advance directives.

Patients responded positively to the videos, which facilitated conversations. According to Sister Louise, "since the videos are not long and enduring, the patients don't feel like they're wasting their time, plus the videos help us move the discussion along, especially since people tend to be more visual and prefer seeing a video than reading something on paper."

Improved Understanding of Options

The videos enabled patients to better grasp concepts like CPR, intubation and ICU care. "It is not unusual for patients who initially say they want to be resuscitated, to change their mind after watching the **CPR or Goals of Care** video." Says Jae.

According to Sister Louise, "when our patients actually look at those videos, they have a sense – a better understanding of what an advance directive is."

Understanding that there are options that fall between "I want everything done" and "I'm a hospice patient" gives many patients peace of mind. As Jae points out, "hospice is still a hard sell, even though I truly believe it is the gold standard of care for a patient at the end of life who has advanced heart failure. Having another option to offer them is helpful. The way the ACP Decisions video system breaks it down makes it very easy to understand for patients."

LOOKING AHEAD

HFC sees opportunity to further improve their advance care planning care using the videos. While their goal during the grant period was to use the videos with 70% of patients seen at least three times, they ended up showing them to 50.5%. If a patient reported they had an advance directive, they were typically not shown the videos; however, the staff believes many of these patients would have benefited from seeing the videos.

The clinic will continue using the ACP Decisions video system and plans to support its implementation in the Saint Agnes Cancer Institute, COPD clinic, and Comprehensive Care Clinic. "I'm extremely proud of our nursing care, and advance care planning is something we felt really strongly we wanted to do better. To have a tool was a relief for the staff," says Jae.



CONTACT INFORMATION

To learn more about how to improve advance care planning at your facility, visit ACP Decisions at acpdecisions.org or email support@acpdecisions.org