

# ARKANSAS SPECIALTY SURGERY CENTER

## INFORMATION PAMPHLET

### **Advance Directives Information:**

Advance Directives (Living Wills and Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare) are legal documents which provide guidance to your physicians and family about your healthcare treatments in the event that you are unable to communicate your wishes. As of December 1, 1991 a federal law requires a hospital to ask every person, over the age of 18, at the time of admission if they have or desire to have an Advance Directive. You are not required to have such a document to receive a medical treatment. However, the law is intended to inform you of your right to complete an Advance Directive, as means to make your healthcare wishes known.

**Personal Choices:** Adult patients (over 18 years old) may have the right to accept or refuse any medical or surgical treatment by means of a Living Will. You have the right to appoint a relative or a friend to make medical decisions for you in the event that you become unconscious or mentally unable to make decisions. This is known as a Healthcare Power of Attorney (Proxy). These documents may be completed or changed at any time. Further explanation follows.

### **What is a Living Will?**

With today's advances in medical technology, the process of dying can be prolonged by what are often referred to as "artificial means". A Living Will can be used to let your Healthcare team and family members know whether or not you wish to have such interventions used on your behalf. The instructions in a Living Will are followed only if you are permanently unconscious or terminally ill and unable to communicate. A Living Will is a legal document that states your wishes about medical treatment if a doctor determines that you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious. It is important to make sure that your doctors know that you have a Living Will and a copy is placed in your chart upon admission to ASSC. The Living Will can go into effect only if your doctor knows it exists and he/she decides that you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious.

### **What types of treatment are affected by a Living Will?**

In your Living Will, you can tell your doctor you do not want certain treatments. You may not want to be hospitalized if you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious. You may decide against any treatments that will not cure you, but only postpone the moment of death by artificially keeping your bodily functions going. Examples:

- \* Artificial Feeding (a tube fed through your nose, abdomen, or IV)
- \* Artificial breathing: Ventilators
- \* CPR: Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation-When the heart stops (cardiac arrest) doctors and nurses use special measures called cardiac resuscitation to try to restart the heart. This may include massaging the heart, giving medications, or using electric shock.

***In accordance with your wishes, a Living Will may direct your doctors to use or not to use any or all of these measures.***

### **What is a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare?**

A Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare is a document in which you name a Healthcare Proxy. A Healthcare Proxy is a person who you appoint to make your medical decisions if you are unable to make them yourself. This person may make decisions that are not clearly stated in your Living Will. The proxy you appoint must be 18 years or older. If you have decided to appoint a proxy, you must fill out the Appointment of Healthcare Proxy/Healthcare Representative form. In addition to your own signature, your Advance Directives must be signed in the presence of two witnesses. However, do not sign anything unless you fully understand what you are signing.

Once you have completed your Advance Directives, you should give copies to your attorney, doctors, friends, and family members. Copies should also be placed in your medical record/hospital chart. You can revoke your Advance Directives at any time simply by telling your physicians, nurses, family members or other witnesses. Changes can be made by completing a new Advance Directives. All copies of the old directives should immediately be retrieved and destroyed because they are no longer in effect.

If you would like to talk to someone about Advanced Directives, please contact your nurse, Chaplaincy Services Representative or social worker. Remember that Advance Directives are an important personal matter. However, we do encourage you to discuss these with your family and personal physician before making any decisions.

### **Should I have a Living Will and a Healthcare Power of Attorney?**

You do not have to be seriously ill or even expect to be ill in order to benefit from having these documents. If you sign them when you are still able, you will be protecting your family members from emotional stress in an unexpected crisis. You will be deciding in advance who will make healthcare decisions for you based upon your wishes. These documents will give you control over the extent to which doctors will use various medical means to prolong your life. By doing this, you will relieve others from the responsibility of having to decide what you want because you have made your own wishes known.

### **Does this mean giving up or stopping care?**

No, the only care that will be discontinued is the treatment your Advance Directives indicates you do not wish to receive. In that case, your doctors and nurses will continue to care for you, making every effort to help you be comfortable and pain free.

### **Can my healthcare representative make decisions even if I am not terminally ill?**

Yes, for example, if you are in a car accident and you become unconscious, your healthcare representative can make medical decisions on your behalf about your medical care until you are able to do so. Therefore, you should talk with your representative, so that person will know what your wishes are.

### **How do I make a Living Will and Healthcare Power of Attorney?**

You can make a Living Will and Healthcare Power of Attorney by completing and signing the forms included in this pamphlet. You must have two adults, other than your healthcare representative, witness your signature and sign the forms before they are considered legal.

### **What do I do with my Living Will and Healthcare Power of Attorney?**

Give copies to your doctors, hospital, healthcare representatives, family members and important people in your life. It is important for them to know your wishes relative to your own healthcare.

### **What if I change my mind?**

You can change or cancel your Living Will at any time. Make sure you tell your doctors, hospital, healthcare representative, family members, and important people in your life that your wishes have changed. Ask them to tear up and destroy all copies of the old Living Will.

### **What can be done if my wishes are not being carried out?**

The issues should be discussed with your doctor(s) first. If it is not resolved at this point, discuss with your nurses, social worker, and/or chaplain. If it is still not resolved, present the issue to the ACS.

### **Help is available**

Your living will and Healthcare Power of Attorney involve some of life's most important choices and ethical considerations. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Ask your doctor to discuss these questions with you or refer you to someone who is qualified to help.

### **Organ/Tissue donation**

The uniform Anatomical Gift Act, adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, regulates who may donate organs/tissues for transplantation and who may receive an organ/tissue donation.

### **What should I do if I want to donate my organ/tissues for transplantation?**

If you are at least 18 years of age and an Arkansas Resident you may contact the Arkansas Department of Motor Vehicle Branch nearest you and have them indicate on your Driver's License that you wish to be an Organ Donor. Your designation will then be printed on your license. Or you may call ARORA-Arkansas Regional Organ Recovery Agency- at the number at the end of this section and ask them to send you a donor registry form.

### **What organs can be donated?**

Organs or tissue needed for transplantation are kidneys, lungs, heart, liver, and pancreas. Tissues used are eyes, corneas, bone, skin, and heart valves.

**Should I talk with my family about donating my organs?**

Yes, even if you have signed an Organ Donor Card, your family will be consulted upon your death and prior to the removal of any organs/tissues. The best way to avoid conflicts is to talk with them beforehand and make sure they understand your wishes.

**Do I have to pay anything to donate my organs?**

No. The recipient pays the cost of organ donation. If you have specific questions about organ/tissue donations, ask your nurse to notify ARORA for you or you may call them directly at:

**Arkansas Regional Organ Recovery Agency**

1701 Aldersgate Rd #4

Little Rock, AR 72205

24 hour service call line: 501-224-2623