

# PLANNING IN ADVANCE

## An Information Guide for Patients and Families

### Your Right to Decide About Treatment

Adults in New York State have the right to accept or refuse medical treatment, including life-sustaining treatment. Our Constitution and state laws protect this right. This means that you have the right to request or consent to treatment, to refuse treatment before it has started, and to stop treatment once it has begun.

### Planning in Advance

Sometimes because of illness or injury, people are unable to talk to a doctor and decide about treatment for themselves. You may wish to plan in advance to make sure that your wishes about treatment will be followed if you become unable to decide for yourself for a short or long time period. If you do not plan ahead, family members or other people close to you may not be allowed to make decisions for you and follow your wishes.

In New York State, appointing someone you can trust to decide about treatment if you become unable to decide for yourself is the best way to protect your treatment wishes and concerns. You have the right to appoint someone by filling out a form called a Health Care Proxy.

A copy of the form and information about the Health Care Proxy are available from your health care provider.

If you have no one you can appoint to decide for you, or do not want to appoint someone, you can give specific instructions about treatment in advance. Those instructions can be written, and are often referred to as a Living Will.

You should understand that general instructions about refusing treatment, even if written down, may not be effective. Your instructions must clearly cover the treatment decisions that must be made. For example, if you just write down that you do not want "heroic measures," the instructions may not be specific enough. You should say the kind of treatment that you do not want, such as a respirator or chemotherapy, and describe the medical condition when you would refuse the treatment, such as when you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious with no hope of recovering.

You can also give instructions orally by discussing your treatment wishes with your doctor, family members, or others close to you. Putting it in writing is safer than speaking to people, but neither method is as effective as appointing someone to decide for you in a Health Care Proxy. It is often hard for people to know in advance what will happen to them or what their medical needs will be in the future. If you choose someone to decisions for you, that person can talk to your doctor and make decisions that they believe you would have wanted or that are best for you, when needed.

If you have no one you can appoint to decide for you, or if you do not want to appoint someone, you may give specific instructions about treatment in advance by your own written instructions which are often referred to as a Living Will, which may compliment your Health Care Proxy.

## **Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation**

Your right to decide about treatment also includes the right to decide about cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). CPR is emergency treatment to restart the heart and lungs when breathing or circulation stops.

Sometimes doctors and patients decide in advance that CPR should not be provided and the doctor gives the medical staff orders not to resuscitation (DNR order). If a physical or mental condition prevents you from deciding about CPR, someone you have appointed can decide for you.

## **Patient Representative Program**

The Olean General Hospital Patient Representative may assist you by answering questions regarding patient responsibilities, patients' rights, and the Health Care Proxy Law. She may also address questions concerning Hospital operations, services or the Ethics Committee.

Please do not hesitate to call on your Patient Representative if you need assistance with any aspect of your medical care during your hospital stay.

Patient Representatives can be reached by dialing Olean General Hospital extension 6348 from inside the Hospital or by calling (716) 375-6348 through an outside line or by asking your nurse to contact the Patient Representative.

## **Olean General Hospital Mission Statement**

To be the area's hospital of choice and, by coordinating our services with those of other organizations and providers, together we meet the broad healthcare needs of the community.