

New Research Focuses on Monterey County Residents

CCA-sponsored Study Examines Advance Directive Use

This spring, researchers completed a study of advance directive use in Monterey County. Local leaders will use findings from the project, which was led by Compassionate Care Alliance (CCA) board member Dr. Marc Tunzi of Natividad Medical Center, to better inform patients, families and professionals.

The study results will be released during the CCA Spring Forum on Thursday, May 20 at Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Conference Rooms in Ryan Ranch, and attendees will then discuss ways to improve care planning outreach countywide.

More than 200 patients from all 4 Monterey County hospitals participated in the 4-month study, which examined where individuals get advance directive information, who guides them through the forms and how they initiate related discussions with loved ones.

"The CCA-sponsored survey of advance directives in Monterey County is the first I am aware of anywhere in the U.S. to address where the patients with ADs obtained their documents and what they know about them," says Dr. Tunzi. "The four local hospitals are looking forward to presenting the research data at our community forum in May. We know the feedback will help determine what steps need to be taken for future education on advance care planning."

Members of CCA's HELP (Health, Economic and Legal Professionals) group gathered in March, along with panelists from advance care planning and POLST workshops, to discuss the survey results. Using perspective gathered from the CCA Spring Forum, this core workgroup will collaborate on advance care planning outreach – including raising awareness of advance directives, educating the public on what such forms can and cannot do, and detailing how they differ from living wills and estate planning documents.

Partnering with Dr. Tunzi on the project were Dr. John Hausdorff of Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Dr. Sandra Montijo and Graciela Navarro of Mee Memorial Hospital, Mike Hutchinson of Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System and CCA Board President Mary Brusuelas of Central California Alliance

for Health. Salinas High School statistics students and students from Salinas Valley Memorial's Summer Health Institute helped tabulate the results.

CCA thanks Dr. Tunzi for spearheading

the research project. His vision, leadership and motivation to learn more mean that Monterey County residents will now be better supported as they make difficult end-of-life care decisions.



The original planning group for the Advance Directive Research project included Mary Brusuelas, Graciela Navarro, Dr. Sandra Montijo, Mike Hutchinson and Dr. Marc Tunzi.

Professionals Invited to Share Perspective and Shape Outreach CCA Spring Forum Will Discuss End-of-life Care Planning

Non-profit leaders and medical, legal and financial planning professionals are invited to help shape advance care planning in Monterey County during the CCA Spring Forum on Thursday, May 20. The event will take place from 6:45-8:30 p.m., at the Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Conference Rooms in Monterey's Ryan Ranch.

The forum opens with a presentation on recent advance directive research led

by CCA board member Dr. Marc Tunzi. In addition to releasing results from the study, he will discuss how area patients are learning about and using advance directive forms.

From there, attendees will break into small workgroups to discuss the study results and develop concrete ideas for improving education about and implementation of advance directives. A local

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Message from the Executive Director



In the spring of 2000, Hospice Foundation gathered a group of non-profit representatives and health care leaders to discuss end-of-life issues in Monterey

County. The interest in these topics inspired a coalition that could facilitate ongoing dialogue and provide resources for those facing difficult care decisions.

Ten years later, that coalition lives on as Compassionate Care Alliance. The collaborative spirit under which we were founded continues, too. We remain a small agency by choice, but we make far-reaching impact through community partnerships. Our close relationship with local organizations keeps us up to date on what resources are available, and allows us to provide information and events not duplicated elsewhere. The guidance of our accomplished board members and supporters, so generous with their time and talents, helps us

produce a broad mix of programming – from resource guides to research to on-stage productions.

Today, we also find ourselves in the right place at the right time. As baby boomers reach retirement age and the nation continues to debate new directions for health care, CCA adds insight to related discussions. We regularly receive requests to participate in panels and presentations about end-of-life issues. And, the information we provide on advance care planning seems more important than ever.

Like all families, businesses and non-profit agencies, our organization faces challenges during these uncertain economic times. Still, thanks to the financial and personal support of our donors, committee members, volunteers and partners, we have an ambitious collection of workshops, art events and outreach scheduled for this year. Dedicated and enthusiastic medical, legal and financial professionals help shape and lead our advance care planning workshops and

POLST outreach. Our spring forum will feature advance directive research gathered by CCA board member Dr. Marc Tunzi and his colleagues, as well as an update on palliative care efforts throughout Monterey County. We also are excited for the fall opening of *Exit Strategy*, a production written by CCA Healing Through the Arts committee chair Cindy Gum. The play explores many of the decisions and emotions families face when a loved one falls ill.

As Compassionate Care Alliance marks a decade of service, we extend a sincere thanks to all who have helped us along the way. When you support CCA, your time and dollars help people right here in the community. If you're interested in donating or volunteering for future outreach, please call us at 831-655-9506 or visit www.ComCareAlliance.org. Enjoy this issue of *CompassioNotes*, and thank you for your support.

—Vicki Nelson, Executive Director

Latest CCA Production Explores Social Issues and End-of-life Decisions

Exit Strategy to Debut This October at Carl Cherry Center

Two years after the successful production of *Legacy* at Carmel's Carl Cherry Center for the Arts, CCA will again explore end-of-life issues on stage. *Exit Strategy*, written by CCA Healing Through the Arts committee chair Cindy Gum, opens Friday, October 1, 2010, and runs through Saturday, October 23.

Exit Strategy shares the story of a widowed family physician and a feisty woman who has lost her job, her home and her health insurance. The two meet at a Lake Tahoe cabin under unusual circumstances. Through a series of surprising communications and challenges, the characters address illness, grief, healing and paranormal experiences at life's end, while also shedding light on health care delivery and the country's medical system.

As she crafted the script, Gum incorporated issues that real families face. The goal is to connect audience members with these health care topics and inspire them to act.

"The play mirrors some of the problems we all face, not only in regards to health care, but also in relation to the end of life. When all is said and done, we will each face those situations in our own way," she says. "My hope is that art projects such as



Following a reading of *Exit Strategy*, audience members participated in a discussion with the actors and playwright.

this play will help people talk about these issues with their families and loved ones."

Richard Boynton, one of *Exit Strategy's* lead actors, praises the collaborative efforts that shaped the production.

"Other than writing my own work, I have never watched or worked in a setting where the development was this participatory," he says. "Cindy is a great juggler of ideas, very flexible and clearly driven by a commitment to the message of the piece rather than her own individual words or ideas. That is very rare, and a thing to be treasured."

Several other well-known theater personalities are involved with *Exit Strategy*. Joining Boynton on stage is veteran local director and actress Rosemary Luke, who

starred in CCA's 2008 production of *Legacy*. John Farmanesh-Bocca, who served as directing fellow at The Juilliard School's Drama Division and now guest teaches annually at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, is directing the production. He is also an artist-in-residence for Pacific Repertory Theatre and the Carmel Shakespeare Festival.

Following each *Exit Strategy* performance, audience members will be invited to join the playwright and cast members for a conversation about the issues raised on stage. A similar discussion followed a staged reading of the play in February. There, guests praised how

the story explored real issues. They also pointed out the apt timing of the production, given an aging baby boom population and the ongoing national health care debate.

"During the audience dialogue that follows these productions, people are really speaking from the heart," says CCA board president Mary Brusuelas. "This is one place where we really see the impact of our work. Here, we get a strong sense of the social impact CCA makes throughout the community."

Two more staged readings will be scheduled before the October *Exit Strategy* opening.



Steve Brooks, Emergency Medical Services analyst for Monterey County, discusses the POLST form and its use by first responders with the POLST Workgroup.

CCA Leads Efforts to Inform Professionals and the Public POLST Outreach Continues in Monterey County

In January 2009, California lawmakers signed legislation requiring that providers honor the Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form. POLST, which is completed with the approval of a patient and his or her physician, documents an individual's wishes about pain management, resuscitation, feeding procedures and other treatments. Instead of taking the place of a living will or durable power of attorney, POLST remains with patients wherever they travel or receive care.

To inform professionals and the public about the document, the California HealthCare Foundation provided grants to 18 coalitions and tasked them with conducting POLST outreach. CCA is Monterey County's lead POLST agency and, since receiving the grant, has prepped more POLST overview trainers than any coalition in the state.

"In the one year since POLST went into effect in California, the response has been incredibly positive," says Judy Citko, JD, executive director of the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California. "Thousands of health care providers across the state have begun implementing POLST as part of their standard of practice, and many say that POLST has been a very useful tool in helping translate patients' wishes into orders that can easily be followed. POLST has drawn attention to the importance of having meaningful conversations with patients about their wishes for medical treatment at any time during an illness, but particularly when facing serious illness or end-of-life decisions."

Among the California physicians discussing POLST initiatives is Dr. Harry Knaster, Medical Director of Healthcare Navigator Service.

"Members of the statewide POLST

physicians group were invited to a geriatric teaching conference at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. The conference was designed as a mini-fellowship, geared toward enhancing geriatric knowledge and teaching skills for non-geriatricians," he explains. "I was fortunate to attend and hope to bring home to Monterey, and specifically to the family practice residents at Natividad Medical Center, this useful information."

CCA began local POLST outreach by working with bioethics committees at area hospitals. Each facility developed a policy for POLST usage within its institution. From there, CCA formed a core workgroup and began communicating with emergency responders, hospital personnel, doctors, attorneys, home health agencies and hospice workers. Now that workgroup is ready to reach out to members of the public, highlighting POLST as one part of the larger care planning picture.

Efforts also continue at skilled nursing facilities, where POLST forms can be particularly important.

"Skilled nursing facilities residents sometimes face care-related decisions on a more immediate timeframe than other individuals. POLST gives them the opportunity to make their wishes known before an emergency," says CCA board president Mary Brusuelas.

Kathee McFarland, LVN, a certified geriatric care manager, agrees.

"The beauty and simplicity of POLST is that copies are considered legal when signed by a doctor. If we have to send someone to the hospital, we simply send a copy of the POLST. The EMT and the hospital then have the doctor's orders to follow, plus an original POLST remains in the home if needed in the future," she says.

Thank You for Supporting CCA

Compassionate Care Alliance offers community programs, workshops and end-of-life care resources thanks to the generous assistance of local donors and supporters. Whether they give time or dollars, personal connections or professional expertise, these individuals and partner organizations help us raise awareness and inspire discussion throughout the local community. We couldn't make an impact without them.

A full Champions List appeared in CCA's fall 2009 newsletter. To volunteer, help plan events, participate in workshops or make a tax-deductible gift, call CCA at 831-655-9506 or visit www.CompassionateCareAlliance.org. Please consider making a mid-year donation today: Gifts of all sizes help us make a bigger impact as we serve the local community.

END-OF-LIFE CARE PLANNING

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professional familiar with care planning challenges will lead dialogue in each group. Finally, attendees will reconvene to share and discuss suggestions in a conversation moderated by CSUMB philosophy professor Dr. John Berteaux.

Some participants will earn continuing education units for attending the forum.

The advance directive research project raised many questions about how patients make end-of-life care decisions, and event organizers see this as a first step toward improving outreach on the local level.

"We realized the problem doesn't have easy answers and we need to make multi-factorial decisions. By bringing together an interdisciplinary group to review the data and offer suggestions, we plan to have concrete suggestions for change by the end of the evening," says Dr. Tunzi.

CCA's 2010 Spring Forum is sponsored in part by Central Coast Senior Services, Inc. Seating for the forum is limited and reservations required at 831-655-9506.



Lieutenant Colonel David Crawford welcomes Dr. Grant Swanson, executive director Vicki Nelson and estate planning attorney Kelly Vasquez at an Advance Care Planning/POLST workshop at Defense Language Institute.

Several Workshops Planned for 2010

Events Spark Increased Interest in Advance Care Planning

CCA's advance care planning workshop series, which kicked off last fall, continues to engage Monterey County residents in discussions about end-of-life realities and challenges.

The free workshops address legal, financial and estate considerations, hospice and palliative care, surrogate concerns, grief and recovery. Panelists also discuss family dynamics and issues raised when relatives face a health crisis together, as well as POLST forms, advance directives and other planning tools.

Panelists include doctors, attorneys and financial planners, along with staff members from home health agencies, paralegals, emergency medical technicians and other professionals who contribute from-the-field perspective to discussions.

In March, staff from the Presidio of Monterey U.S. Army Health Clinic and Judge Advocate General attorneys and paralegals attended a workshop at Monterey's Defense Language Institute. The group discussed the importance of advance directives for individuals of all ages, because accidents and illness can claim the young and old alike.

"Family members and persons close to patients do experience needless agony in being forced to make life and death decisions without the patient's clear guidance. It is far better to make one's wishes known and to appoint an agent ahead of time, through an advance directive," says Dave Riddle, chief of legal assistance for Office of the Staff Judge Advocate. "These deaths are often

particularly tough on relatives because they are more unexpected than deaths from lingering illnesses such as cancer, and the patients tend to be younger."

Dr. Grant Swanson, medical director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Community Hospital, sees an increasing number of professionals looking to learn more.

"The large turnout and active involvement by attendees demonstrates how interest in advance care planning continues to grow. It is important that we continue to reach out to both professionals involved in this area, as well as the general public," he says.

Additional advance care planning workshops will be scheduled throughout Monterey County in the coming months.

Plan to attend CCA's Spring Forum Advance Directives in Monterey County: Realities & Challenges

Thursday, May 20 from 6:45 to 8:30 p.m.
Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Conference Rooms
5 Lower Ragsdale Drive in Ryan Ranch

Seating is limited and reservations are required by
calling 655-9506 or visiting www.ComCareAlliance.org

There is no charge for the event.

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