

PS2.260

How do GPs handle advance directives and health care proxies? A questionnaire survey among German GPs

Rieke Schnakenberg(1), B Weltermann(2), D Becka(3), A Althaus(4), F Frank(5), A Sönnichsen(6), S Wilm(7), M Bleckwenn(1)

(1) Department of General Practice and Family Medicine, University of Bonn, Germany

(2) Department of General Medicine, University Duisburg/Essen, Germany

(3) Department of General Medicine Bochum, Germany

(4) Department of General Medicine Cologne, Germany

(5) General Medicine - Teaching Area Aachen, Germany

(6) Institute of General Practice and Family Medicine Witten/Herdecke, Germany

(7) Institute of General Practice Düsseldorf, Germany

(8) Department of General Practice and Family Medicine, University of Bonn, Germany

Corresponding author: PhD Fellow Rieke Schnakenberg, Medical Faculty, University of Bonn, Institute for General Practice and Family Medicine, Bonn, Germany. E-mail: rieke.schnakenberg@ukb.uni-bonn.de

Background: As a result of a new law in 2009 we observe an increasing patient demand for provisions such as advance directives and/or health care proxies. Beside notaries, general practitioners (GPs) are the preferred contact persons to discuss and compose such documents. There are no data how GPs manage such consultations. This questionnaire survey addresses the frequency of such consultations, their duration, if they are initiated by physicians or patients, if predefined templates are used and how GPs document the results.

Method: 959 GPs from university affiliated teaching practices in North Rhine-Westphalia were surveyed with a two-sided questionnaire. The frequency of such consultations was estimated by a five-step scale (“5 times per annum” to “>20 times per annum”). The duration of a counselling was requested in minutes. We asked how often such consultations are initiated by patients or physicians. The data were analyzed using SPSS on Windows.

Results: The participation rate was 50.3% (n=482). Consultations were initiated by patients more frequently than by GPs. Less than 5% of GPs never conduct these advices. The GPs' estimates consultations on advance directives take five minutes more on average than those for health care proxies (20.7 versus 15.8). Nearly 80% of GPs use predefined templates and 44% of GPs state that patients “often” or “very often” bring templates in contrast to 14.1% state “very rarely” and “rarely”. The majority document by scan, followed by written chart notes and copy. Half of the GPs did not yet write a proxy for themselves.

Conclusion: This study provides picture of the ways how German GPs handle consultations for advance directives and health care proxies. Based on this survey further research is needed on how to improve physicians in their counseling on these matters, especially the quality of GPs' advice and the implementation of supportive measures.