

End-of-Life Decision Making and Advance

End-of-Life Decision Making and Advance Directives

1. Introduction

- End-of-life decisions concern the care and treatment of patients approaching death.
- Advance directives let people express their wishes before losing capacity.

2. Advance Directives

- **Living will:** a written statement of desired or refused treatments.
- **Durable power of attorney:** appoints someone to make decisions on the patient's behalf.
- These guide care when the patient can no longer communicate.

3. Key Ethical Issues

- Balancing the prolongation of life against quality of life and dignity.
- Respecting autonomy while considering beneficence and non-maleficence.

4. Common Decisions

- **Do-not-resuscitate (DNR):** an order to withhold cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- Withholding or withdrawing treatment that no longer benefits the patient.
- Palliative care to relieve suffering at the end of life.

5. Roles of the Team and Family

- Clinicians provide information and support decision-making.
- Families and surrogates help interpret the patient's wishes.

6. Summary

- Advance directives protect autonomy at the end of life.
- Decisions balance dignity, comfort, and the patient's expressed wishes.