



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Maryland Health Care System

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3900 Loch Raven Boulevard
Baltimore MD 21218

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January 5th, 2006

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

I am writing to convey our positive experience with the Maryland State "Patient Plan of Care" form at the VA Maryland Health Care System during our recent JCAHO survey.

The VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) is a multi-center institution that includes a tertiary care hospital, two nursing home facilities and multiple outpatient centers. The VAMHCS recently adopted the "Patient Plan of Care" as part of our Advance Care Planning initiative for patients with life-limiting illness.

Documentation of patient preferences for care at end of life is a priority indicator for JCAHO. During our recent survey, we were specifically questioned by a surveyor about the documentation of end of life preferences and how they are communicated between team members and to other care settings. In the record that was reviewed by the surveyor, the patient declined to execute an Advance Directive. Fortunately, the 'Patient Plan of Care' was present on the cover sheet of our computerized medical record documenting the physician-patient discussion of the patient's wishes regarding key end of life treatments, including CPR, transfer to hospital and artificial feeding.

The feedback from the surveyor was very positive and the 'Patient Plan of Care' was specifically cited as an excellent quality improvement measure by the surveyor at the close of our survey.

Thanks to you and your team for this useful communication tool.

Sincerely,
Lynn Hallarman, MD

Director, Palliative Care Services
VA Maryland Health Care System