



Advance Medical Directives

Valuable Information on How to Complete an Advance Medical Directive

By now most everyone is familiar with Terry Shiavo and the very difficult circumstances surrounding her death. One issue that many people are now talking about is Advance Medical Directives such as a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Decisions (DPAHCD). A DPAHCD is a document that provides guidance to medical professionals if you are incapacitated and cannot make your own medical decisions. A DPAHCD helps ensure that a person's wishes regarding future medical treatment are carried out. While this is certainly something that none of us want to think about, such a document serves to protect a patient's rights and can relieve families from the burden of making such grave decisions.

If you want information on DPAHCDs, I recommend going to the Missouri Bar's website at <http://www.mobar.org/pamphlet/dpa.htm>. There you can download a packet of information on DPAHCDs that includes the actual documents to complete, directions on how to fill them out, and a list of frequently asked questions. In order for the DPAHCD to be valid, there are three parts that must be completed:

Part I is the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, which allows you to appoint someone to make decisions for you if you are not able.

Part II is the Health Care Directive that allows you to express specifically what procedures you want withheld if you are incapacitated or terminally ill.

Part III is where the document is notarized. The document must be notarized if you intend to use the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care in Part 1.

With the passage of the Patient Self Determination Act of 1990 hospitals are required to ask patients being admitted to the hospital if they have or want to fill out an Advance Medical Directive. The best time to consider and sign such a document is before you are hospitalized or injured. While not all will agree on what to do if they or someone they love becomes severely disabled or loses cognitive abilities, Terry Shiavo's situation and others like it remind us of the importance of at least talking about these difficult matters openly and honestly.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

Thank you for your time.

Senator Jason Crowell represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.