ECHO® MOLST: Honoring Preferences at End-of-life

Crucial Conversations: Use Both Sides of Your Brain

COVID-19: Why it Matters
Presenter

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Learning Objectives

• Recognize MOLST is a communication process that requires both reason and compassion

• Apply the 8-Step Protocol

• Demonstrate effective communication skills that convey the impact of COVID-19 for high risk patients in all settings where the prognosis is poor, and the chance of survival is low
Crucial Conversations Require Wisdom

- When one prevents one’s emotions from overtaking one’s rationality it is called **reason**.
- When one prevents one’s rationality from overtaking one’s emotions it is called **compassion**.
- When one can do both, it is called **wisdom**.

Ancient Chinese Proverb
8-Step MOLST Protocol

1. Prepare for discussion
   • Understand patient’s health status, prognosis & ability to consent
   • Retrieve completed Advance Directives
   • Determine decision-maker and NYSPHL legal requirements, based on who makes decision and setting

2. Determine what the patient and family know
   • re: condition, prognosis

3. Explore goals, hopes and expectations

4. Suggest realistic goals

5. Respond empathetically

6. Use MOLST to guide choices and finalize patient wishes
   • Shared, informed medical decision-making
   • Conflict resolution

7. Complete and sign MOLST
   – Follow NYSPHL and document conversation

8. Review and revise periodically

Developed for NYS MOLST, Bomba, 2005; revised 2011

Step 1: Prepare for Discussion

• Understand patient’s health status, prognosis & ability to consent (*Be sure patient is appropriate for MOLST, as discussed in Session 1*)
• Retrieve completed Advance Directives, especially Health Care Proxy & current contact phone #
• Determine decision-maker and NYSPHL legal requirements, based on who makes decision and setting (*as discussed in Session 3 & 4*)
• Invite important people to hear discussion (health care agent and family)
Effective Communication Skills

Thoughtful MOLST Discussions

• Express yourself clearly
• Ask open-ended questions
• Actively listen
• Reflect: paraphrase the message and communicate understanding back
• Resolve conflicts
Effective Communication Skills
Discuss COVID-19

• Avoid jargon. Explain in simple terms.
• Use active listening skills
• Focus on achievable goals for patient’s care.
• Manage unrealistic expectations. Clarify possibilities. Negotiate goals.
• Manage anger. Serve as an advocate.
• Address death and dying; share information
• Review care plan based on MOLST
Step 2: Determine What the Patient & Family Know re: Condition & Prognosis

• What have you heard from other doctors about your condition? (Start from there.)
• What is your understanding of COVID-19?
• Inform patient they are appropriate for a MOLST discussion based on MOLST screening.
• Offer the opportunity to continue. (MOLST is voluntary. Patient may not ready to accept his condition and prognosis.)
• Respond with emotion and empathy.
Estimate and Communicate Prognosis

• Physicians markedly over-estimate prognosis
• Accurate information helps patient / family cope and plan
• Offer a range for average life expectancy
  – days to weeks
  – weeks to 3 months
  – 3 – 6 months (PCIA, PCAA, Hospice*)
  – 6 months to 1 year (MOLST**)
  – > 1 year (MOLST: e.g. persons of advanced age may have explicit wishes.)

* Would it surprise you if this person died in the next 6 months?
** Would it surprise you if this person died in the next year?
Discussing Prognosis

• What sort of information about the future would help you?

• Most people want to know about their prognosis – and don’t want to know – at the same time. What about you?

• Would it be best to talk about what can be done in the hospital and what can be done here?
Step 3: Explore Values, Beliefs, Goals and Expectations

- Identify patient’s personal values and beliefs
- Recognize patient’s personal goals for care
  - What makes life worth living
  - What matters most
- Personal goals align with
  - Longevity
  - Functional Preservation
  - Comfort Care
- Does COVID-19 change this?
Align Language with Person-centered Goals for Care

- **Longevity**: We want to ensure you receive the kind of treatment you want and needs in order to attend your son’s wedding

- **Functional Preservation**: We’ll do everything we can to help you maintain your independence

- **Comfort Care**: Your grandmother’s comfort will be our top priority
Step 4: Suggest Realistic Goals

• Manage unrealistic expectations
  – Likelihood of surviving resuscitation efforts
  – Likelihood of surviving respiratory support on a ventilator

• Clarify possibilities

• Negotiate goals
Managing Unrealistic Expectations:
Clarify Possibilities. Negotiate Goals.

• What do you understand about your father’s condition given COVID-19?

• What do you hope we can accomplish with our medical care?

• I wish for that too....

• Unfortunately, a ventilator, the medications or all the love you have for him...
Step 5: Respond empathetically

• When you notice an emotion, respond with
  – **N**aming: put emotion into words
  – **U**nderstanding: explain how you see it from their perspective
  – **R**especting: admire what you genuinely feel good about
  – **S**upporting: offer your caring, expertise and presence
  – **E**xploring: when you’re not sure where to go, ask for more data
Key Points

• The patient and/or medical decision-maker and family must understand health status, prognosis in the setting of COVID-19 before progressing with MOLST discussion

• Discuss values, beliefs and goals before discussions about preferences re: Resuscitation and other Life Sustaining Treatment

• Establish preferences for Resuscitation, Respiratory Support (Ventilator) & Hospitalization

• For “Do Not Hospitalize” preference, care plan in setting is critical

• Understanding a patient’s goals and values has the potential to humanize the relationship and improve decision-making at all levels, especially during COVID-19
Most Importantly

• In these times of unprecedented uncertainty, let’s make the commitment to
  – Take care of ourselves
  – Remind others to care for themselves
  – Be present
  – Speak from our hearts
  – Lend our energy and our wisdom
  – Act in way that helps others to do the same.
References

• COVID-19 Guidance on MOLST.org
• OPWDD: Individuals with I/DD on MOLST.org
• Thoughtful MOLST Discussions
• 8-Step MOLST Protocol
• MOLST Form
• Using the 8-Step MOLST Protocol Video Series
• Hospital & Hospice Settings Video 43:52
• Nursing Home (Residential Care) Video 20:18
• Vital Talk COVID-Ready Communication Skills