



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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The speaker has no significant financial conflicts of interest to disclose.

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**)
 - > 1year (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