

Advance Directives: Leading by Example

The Problem

Massachusetts promotes the designation of a health care proxy (HCP) for medical decision making in the event of becoming incapacitated. While there is wide spread agreement that filling out an advance directive is a good thing for everyone to do, few patients have done so. Why is this?

We identified several barriers to health care providers not asking their patients to fill out a health care proxy form: lack of time, lack of resources, role responsibilities, and guilt for having not completed a form themselves.

Aim/Goal

BIDMC espouses a philosophy of 'living by example.' We decided to focus on having staff complete advance directives for themselves with the expectation that this will then translate to improvement in this area within patient care.

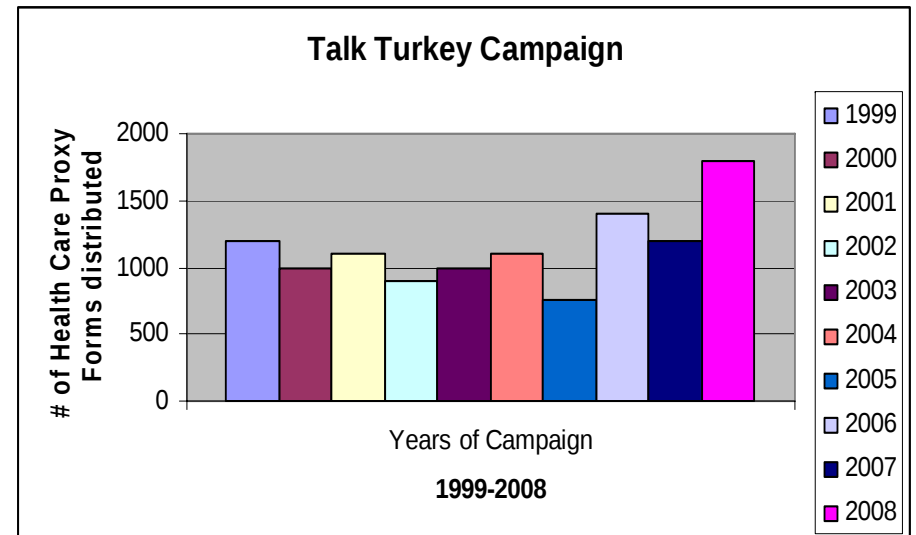
The Team

- Ethics Support Service
- Social Work Department

The Interventions

- Implemented a campaign to distribute Advance Directive Kits—"Talk Turkey Campaign"
- Distribute kits (in 5 different languages) annually the 3 days prior to Thanksgiving at different kiosks within the medical center and at the designated affiliated Community Health Centers
- Recruit volunteers throughout the medical center to assist with distribution
- Train/educate volunteers on Health Care Proxy/Advance Directive Issues

The Results/Progress to Date



Lessons Learned

In 2007, we surveyed 200 random staff. The results were that 46% had not designated a health care proxy. And more than half of the medical center employees who have completed health care proxy forms reported that "Talk Turkey" has directly influenced this.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next:

- Continuing the campaign annually and to expand the campaign to all of the medical center's affiliated health centers and to the community at large
- Continue to increase both staff and patient outreach.



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