

**Senate Special Committee on Aging**

**Roundtable Discussion**

***Continuing the Conversation:***

***The Role of Health Care Providers in Advance Care Planning***

**STATEMENT OF**

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**Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, Coalition to Transform Advanced Care**

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Good afternoon Chairman Nelson, Ranking Member Collins and Members of the Committee:

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Senator Nelson and Senator Collins and the members of the Senate Special Committee on Aging for allowing me the opportunity to moderate this session on the importance of advance care planning in care delivery models. This is an important and often times complex issue.

I would also like to thank the Committee for holding such a successful and important hearing less than a year ago on the issue of advance care planning, specifically. As a follow-up, this Roundtable will allow those who shape and provide services to offer their insight and added dimensions to this important topic.

My name is Jennie Chin Hansen. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), a non-profit organization of over 6,000 geriatrics healthcare

professionals dedicated to improving the health, independence and quality-of-life of all older Americans. I also serve as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee for the Coalition to Transform Advanced Care (CTAC).

AGS members and geriatrics health professionals, with their focus on ensuring independence, function, and quality-of-life for older, frail patients, have a deep understanding and first-hand experience regarding the importance of carefully adhering to the care choices and preferences of the patients they serve. Recently, AGS released a statement on the value of advance care planning that we would like to be included in the record.

#### **AGS Statement on the Value of Advance Care Planning (Released April 2014)**

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS), an organization representing health professionals who care for the sickest, and most vulnerable elders, believes that conversations focused on advance care planning are an essential component of the care delivery process and help ensure that older Americans receive high-quality, person-centered care. Our membership of over 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals, with their focus on ensuring maximal independence, function, and quality of care, have a deep understanding and first-hand experience regarding the importance of ensuring that the wishes of those they care for are respected.

We believe that these frank and open discussions help healthcare professionals and families understand an individual's care preferences. Research has shown that patients who have had such discussions receive care that is congruent with their preferences.<sup>i</sup> Such discussions are key to preserving patient dignity and maximizing comfort at the end-of-life. Research has also shown that advance care planning improves care and quality-of-life for patients, improves patient and family satisfaction, and reduces stress, anxiety, and depression for family caregivers and other relatives.<sup>ii,iii</sup>

For frail elders, advance care planning for care preferences is particularly important and ensures that families, the physician, other healthcare team members understand and act in accordance with a person's wishes when it comes to the type of care that he or she would like

to receive. Such conversations are focused on understanding a person's values to help families and healthcare professionals to make choices that are consistent with those values if the person is unable to participate in decisions about his or her own care.

It is the position of AGS that national and state policies should encourage patients and those who care for them to engage in advance care planning discussions. It is only through such discussions that health professionals can understand the care choices that a patient would make. Voluntary advance planning discussions can facilitate informed decisions prior to the onset of a serious illness or medical crisis and can guide families and health professionals through decisions they may need to make on behalf of their loved ones.

AGS strongly supports bipartisan legislation in Congress that would make confidential and voluntary advance care planning services more widely available to Medicare beneficiaries. It also strongly encourages older adults to engage in conversations and consultations relative to advance care planning and care preferences with their healthcare professionals and their family members. We believe in the value of person-directed advance care planning and urge the Administration and Congress to adopt policies that will incentivize all Americans to make their own informed healthcare choices.

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<sup>i</sup> Silveira MJ, Kim SY, Langa KM. Advance directives and outcomes of surrogate decision making before death. *N Engl J Med*. 2010 Apr 1;362(13):1211-8.

<sup>ii</sup> Detering KM, Hancock AD, Reade MC, Silvester W. The Impact of Advance Care Planning on End of Life Care in Elderly Patients: Randomised Controlled Trial. *British Medical Journal*, 2010: 340:c1345.

<sup>iii</sup> Schwartz CE, Wheeler HB, Hammes B, Basque N, ET AL. Early intervention in planning end-of-life care with ambulatory geriatric patients: results of a pilot trial. *Arch Intern Med*. 2002 Jul 22;162(14):1611-8.