POLST: Doing it Better in Hospice
WHAT IS POLST?

Physicians Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment
Introducing: Understanding POLST

For Information Contact:
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General Agreement: Patients (particularly those nearing the end of life) have the right to decline treatments they do not want and receiving those they do.
Less than 10% of elderly Americans say that they want to die in the hospital...

Medical Care: Barnato et al May 2007, p 389
...And yet about 4 times that many do
WHO SHOULD HAVE A POLST?

POLST is appropriate for patients:
- Who have a serious illness—such as those being admitted to hospice.
- Who are older and frail and may not want to go to the intensive care unit.

POLST is not appropriate for:
- Healthy individuals who would want everything done in a medical emergency.
USE OF POLST IN HOSPICE

- Resuscitation status alone does not predict level of treatment preferences
- Approximately 20% of patients with DNR orders selected Limited Interventions

## POLST - Advance Directive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLST</th>
<th>Advance Directive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physician Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment</td>
<td>Oregon’s Legal Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is a Medical Order</td>
<td>• Is a Legal Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immediately takes effect. <strong>EMS can follow orders</strong></td>
<td>• Needs interpretation to be effective. <strong>EMS cannot</strong> follow (because not medical orders)</td>
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</table>
| • No age limit  
  • Signed by MD, NP, or PA in Oregon | • All competent adults over 18  
  • Signed by the resident |
How Advance Directives and POLST Work Together

Adapted with permission from California POLST Education Program
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- Age 18
  - Complete an Advance Directive
    - Update Advance Directive Periodically
      - Diagnosed with Advanced Illness or Frailty \textit{(at any age)}
        - Complete a POLST Form
          - Change in health status
            - May Complete a new POLST Form
              - Treatment Wishes Honored
HOW DOES POLST WORK?

Conversations between patient and/or family members and health care professional

- Diagnosis
- Prognosis
- Available treatment options
  - Benefits and burdens of each
- Patient goals of care, values
HOW DOES POLST WORK?

- Health care professional completes & signs POLST.
- POLST should never be given to patient to fill out on their own.
- Original POLST is given to patient.
- Put a copy in patient’s medical record.
- Send a copy to Registry unless patient opted out.
THE OREGON POLST Registry

- Immediate/24 hour access to a POLST form
- Provides Registry ID magnet and stickers for patients
- [www.orpolstregistry.org](http://www.orpolstregistry.org)
USE OF POLST EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS IN THE FIELD:

- Videos
- Guidebooks
- Brochures
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SIGNING IN THE FIELD WHEN THE PATIENT IS UNSTABLE:

- Following verbal orders protocols valid with EMS (not valid in the registry)
- Complete two versions, send one for MD, PA, DO, NP to sign, patient keeps one
- Photo copy both sides
- Submit signed version to Oregon POLST Registry
- ePOLST at OHSU (printing option)
Patient’s preferences recorded as medical orders on a POLST Form and how those orders match with death in the hospital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Decedents dying in hospital</th>
<th>Comfort Measures Only (n=11,836)</th>
<th>Limited Treatment (n=4,787)</th>
<th>Full Treatment (n=1,153)</th>
<th>No POLST in Registry (n=40,098)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
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JAGS: Fromme et al 2014 62: 1246-1251
BEST PRACTICES

- POLST is a powerful tool, we have an obligation to be sure it is used correctly

- POLST only as good as the conversation

- POLST should only be used for certain patient populations

- POLST turns patient preferences into action as medical orders
Resources:
www.oregonpolst.org
www.oregonpolst.org/professional-resources/

Also view the films “POLST: Doing It Better” and “Understanding POLST” (Spanish version also available)
www.oregonpolst.org/professional-resource-library