

WHAT THE PATIENT SHOULD EXPECT REGARDING HEALTH CARE

The main goals of health care are to:

- *promote healing,*
- *prevent disease,*
- *prevent untimely death, and*
- *relieve suffering.*

In order to meet these goals, the health care team should perform the following duties:

- *avoid harm to the patient,*
- *respect the patient's dignity and wishes,*
- *support the ethical principles of medicine and*
- *observe professional standards of practice.*

The patient has a right to request and receive information on his or her condition. The health care team and patient should work together as partners to reach a decision regarding treatment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Health Council of South Florida, Inc. thanks its Health Care Ethics Committee, composed of representatives from the following groups in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, for developing the Medical Futility Guidelines of South Florida:

- Leading health care facilities and providers
- Hospice organizations
- Representatives from other business and community settings, including attorneys, clergy and consultants
- Residents and community leaders of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties

A full copy of The Medical Futility Guidelines of South Florida can be obtained at the Health Council website: <http://www.healthcouncil.org> or by calling the Health Council of South Florida, Inc. at (305) 592-1452.



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** The Medical Futility Guidelines of South Florida are not intended to substitute for individual facility policies or essential communication between family and physicians.*

The Medical Futility Guidelines of South Florida

A Guide for Patients and their Families, Health Care Surrogates, or Proxies



Health Council of South Florida, Inc.

A set of guidelines is available from HCSF to assist in conversations with your health care providers and family members.

WHEN THE PATIENT AND DOCTOR DISAGREE

When a treatment is futile but the patient (or family, or health care surrogate or proxy) insists on “doing everything” what process exists to resolve the conflict?

Who decides what to do when a treatment has no known medical benefit: the physician or the patient?

How can communities help patients, families, physicians, hospitals and nursing homes prevent this conflict at the end of life?



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In an effort to address these difficult questions, the Health Council of South Florida, Inc. (HCSF) and its Health Care Ethics Committee developed the Medical Futility Guidelines of South Florida.

The Guidelines were developed through a four year process with help from community leaders, professionals and local residents of various ages, cultures, religions and perspectives in South Florida.

The Guidelines provide steps to follow when the physician considers a treatment futile, but the patient (or family, or surrogate or proxy) insists on receiving that particular treatment.

WHO BENEFITS FROM USING THE GUIDELINES?

The Guidelines are useful for all persons involved in making difficult decisions at the end of life, especially the:

- patients;
- patients' families, or surrogates or proxies;
- physicians and other members of the health care team; and
- hospitals and nursing homes.

A copy of the Guidelines can be obtained from the HCSF (see the back of this brochure for contact information).



USING THE GUIDELINES TO REACH AN AGREEMENT

Before applying the Guidelines, it is important for the patient to know what to ask his or her physician and health care team. The patient should get information on:

- the nature of the condition and what to expect from it;
- the range of options available for care, including comfort care, palliative care and hospice services;
- the likelihood of recovering; and
- the reasons why the treatment is considered futile.

The Guidelines help to open the lines of communication between the patient, the physician and health care team. In addition, they provide a way to ask for and receive information regarding the patient's condition.