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Examining Advance Care Planning Actions Among Community Dwelling Older Adults

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Abstract

Advance care planning (ACP) is defined as having an advance directive, durable power of attorney, or having discussed preferences for end of life with a next of kin. ACP has been studied in populations that are institutionalized or terminally ill and near end of life, with the goal of cost savings for end of life care. Limited research has been done with community dwelling older adults. This exploratory study used the health belief model to assess local, community dwelling older adults' sociodemographic characteristics, perceived benefits of ACP, perceived barriers to ACP, health values at end of life, and preventive health actions, and the reasons participants did or did not engage in ACP. Results reveal that a majority of participants had heard of each of the five ACP documents, but completion rates varied. Sources of information were most commonly attorneys, family members, and doctors. Participants most frequently indicated their completion of an ACP document was to ease the burden on their family, and most frequently indicated their lack of completion was because they hadn't gotten around to it yet. Findings have implications for educating individuals about how they can control their own death experience through their ACP documents.

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