

# **Post-Standard Letter**

Wednesday, August 05, 2009

## **Health care bill won't 'kill Grandma'**

To the Editor:

The troubling rumor that the national health care bill in Congress would force older persons to make end-of-life decisions is absolutely false. I was asked about euthanasia and reform efforts at a forum recently.

A congresswoman on the floor of the House suggested that these efforts would "kill Grandma." Such inflammatory statements are a distorted view of what medical professionals call advance care planning. The truth is that physicians would be given the right to bill for counseling services to patients who may want to discuss their end-of-life wishes. It would be entirely voluntary and consistent with the best ethical medical practice.

Far too few persons have made out living wills, or more importantly, designated a health care proxy. A proxy could speak for them on health care issues if they lacked the capacity to do so.

In Syracuse, a coalition of respected organizations have been working for years to promote advance care planning. We have trained more than 40 facilitators for these difficult discussions among families. Our services are free.

Among the "Sharing Your Wishes" organizations are St. Joseph's Hospital, University Hospital, Crouse Hospital, Hospice of CNY, Loretto, Long Term Care Executive Council, Interfaith Works, Alzheimer's Association and Transitional Living Services. For more information, contact us at [sharingyourwishes@gmail.com](mailto:sharingyourwishes@gmail.com). Visit our Web site at [www.sharingyourwishes.org](http://www.sharingyourwishes.org). We are grateful for the ongoing support of the Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York.

Peter Sarver

Steering Committee Chair

Sharing Your Wishes Community Coalition for Onondaga County