

Share your wishes

To the Editor:

If sudden illness prevented you from making your own medical decisions, would your loved ones feel comfortable making decisions about your care?

April 16 is National Healthcare Decisions Day when you're encouraged to:

- Discuss your values and preferences for health care with loved ones.
- Select a spokesperson and complete a Health Care Proxy form. Provide copies to loved ones, your physician and attorney.
- Be aware of the Family Health Care Decisions Act, which expands the authority of family members and others close to the patient, but does not eliminate the need for open and honest conversations with loved ones

about your wishes and desires for medical care.

- Learn about the MOLST program (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) for seriously ill patients, that defines treatment preferences based on a patient's goals for care and follows a patient through the health care system — facility to facility, physician to physician.

- For physicians and nurse practitioners, get familiar with New York state's new Palliative Care Information Act that now requires you to offer terminally-ill patients information and counseling concerning palliative care and end-of-life options.

All of the details are free online at www.CompassionAndSupport.org.

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