



The Medical Society of the State of New York



A nonprofit independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association

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News Release

Health Care Proxies are Key to Advance Care Planning

**Medical Society of the State of New York and Excellus BlueCross BlueShield
launch public education campaign and enhanced Web site
on National Healthcare Decisions Day**

The Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY) and Excellus BlueCross BlueShield today unveiled a new public education campaign to encourage families to take the time to have thoughtful conversations about end-of-life decisions and to designate a health care spokesperson, or proxy, to carry out their wishes.

"Too often, people do not designate a health care proxy or discuss their end-of-life wishes with their families until it's too late and they no longer have the capacity," said Michael Rosenberg, MD, president of MSSNY. "As physicians, we understand the importance of health care proxies because we see the benefits of having one ... and the consequences of not having one ... first-hand."

The campaign, launched on National Healthcare Decisions Day, features three public service announcements that have been distributed to television stations across New York State, and an enhanced Web site, CompassionAndSupport.org, that provides a wealth of information and resources on a wide variety of end-of-life topics.

The PSAs feature real-life examples of how a person's medical care at the end of life can be enhanced if they take the time to discuss their personal wishes with the person they choose to be their health care proxy. The Web site features those stories and a series of additional video vignettes of families who faced the need to make medical decisions on behalf of a loved one.

"Anyone can face a sudden and unexpected illness or injury, so we strongly encourage everyone over the age of 18 to designate a health care proxy to be their spokesperson and to have a conversation with that person and their family about what is important to them and the type of end-of-life care they want," said Patricia Bomba, MD, vice president and medical director/geriatrics for Excellus BlueCross BlueShield and chair of the National Healthcare Decision Day New York State Coalition.

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The [CompassionAndSupport.org](http://www.CompassionAndSupport.org) Web Site includes information for both families and health care professionals about health care proxies, living wills, Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) and additional resources on end-of-life issues. For those who want to learn about Advance Care Planning, the Web Site includes a “Five Easy Steps” section that guides people through the process.

“It’s important to both complete the paperwork to designate a proxy and to have a conversation with that person and your family to ensure that they understand your values and wishes,” explained Rosenberg.

“While this may be an uncomfortable conversation for some, once you share your wishes and put the paperwork in place, it’s really a gift for your family that provides peace of mind for everyone,” Bomba added.

The public service announcements can be seen in the new Video Library at <http://www.CompassionAndSupport.org>.

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Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY) is an organization of approximately 30,000 licensed physicians, medical residents, and medical students in New York State. Members participate in both the state society and in their local county medical societies. MSSNY is a nonprofit organization committed to representing the medical profession as a whole and advocating health related rights, responsibilities and issues. MSSNY strives to promote and maintain high standards in medical education and in the practice of medicine in an effort to ensure that quality medical care is available to the public.

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, a nonprofit independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association, is part of a family of companies that finances and delivers vital health care services to 1.8 million people across upstate New York. Excellus BlueCross BlueShield provides access to high-quality, affordable health coverage, including valuable health-related resources that our members use every day, such as cost-saving prescription drug discounts and wellness tracking tools in our Step Up program. To learn more, visit <http://www.excellusbcb.com>.