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THE TRIPLE C

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Hospice
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New Regulation Requires the Sharing of End of Life Information for Patients in Long Term Care & Hospital Settings

Massachusetts' secretary for health and human services, posts regulations designed to help patients avoid describing their final medical wishes with an erasable marker. Doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and other health providers in Massachusetts are now required to offer end-of-life counseling to terminally ill patients. It's believed to be the first such rule in the country.

In Massachusetts, hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical facilities, are to identify patients who are in their last six months of life — something state regulators acknowledge is not an exact science. "Nobody has a crystal ball, so it can be challenging," said Dr. Madeleine Biondolillo, an associate commissioner of public health. "But there is plenty of evidence in the literature that can guide the providers."

A nurse or physician caring for the patient will then ask if they want to discuss care options. The state has developed a brochure that providers can give patients, available in nine languages. Biondolillo says the hope is that asking patients if they have an end-of-life plan will become as routine as checking their meds.

The Massachusetts Hospital Association does not expect opposition to the requirement. State regulators say patients will not have to choose between continuing treatment and talking to their doctor about how they want to die. "There's nothing in the regulations that will slow down treatment for a disease," Polanowicz said.

"This is going to be a major step forward in preventing the problem we have, which is we know we ought to talk about these things but it's always too early until it's too late. And now it's going to start happening earlier when it needs to," said Dr. Lachlan Forrow, who chaired an expert panel on end-of-life care in 2011.

The complete circular letter (DHCQ 14-12-623) and the corresponding brochure can be accessed by using the following links:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/quality/hcq-circular-letters/2014/dhcq-1412623.pdf>

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/health-planning/initiatives/eol-english.pdf>

National Wear Red Day is

February 6, 2015

The fact is: Heart Disease is the No. 1 killer, causing 1 in 3 deaths each year. That's approximately one woman every minute!

www.GoRedForWomen.org



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