

Katie Johnson: This program where we offer you news and information that you can use to live a healthier life. I have as my guest today Chaplain Deb Forstner, from Lake Region Healthcare's Chaplaincy Department, to talk more about advanced care planning and healthcare directives.

Good morning, Deb.

Deb Forstner: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Today happens to be the second Tuesday in the month and we know that that means the second Wednesday of the month is tomorrow and that is our regular session on advanced care planning, so that's coming up tomorrow and I thought this would be a good time to talk a little bit more about what this free service offers, what it's about, who it's for, and why people should really consider making it to one of these classes or at least seeking out some more information about advanced care planning. Tell me a little bit more about tomorrow's session. What do you cover in these monthly sessions?

Deb Forstner: First of all, we have them open to the public and we wanted something predictable so that if you know that on the second Wednesday at noon you have something to come to, can't get to it this month, you can get to it the following month. It is at the Cancer Care and Research Center in one of the conference rooms. You just come to the front desk a little before noon and we get you situated with some water and coffee. You can bring your own lunch. What we usually do at the beginning is a pretty brief overview of what healthcare directives are, the importance of choosing healthcare agents that you feel you can trust. Those would be the people that would speak for you if you were unable to speak for yourself due to a medical emergency, and some of the things that make them legal. Once you have a legal document, where they go so that the doctors and medical staff can find them quickly if needed if you were admitted in an emergency situation.

We also have time available where you can actually work on your plan there if you choose. The presentation part just takes about 10 minutes. If the crowd is small it could be we just have a discussion rather than the more formal presentation. Then there would be time to work on your plan. We have sometimes myself there, we have social workers from the Cancer Center available, and we are all notaries. If you get to the point where the document is complete you could then sign it, have it notarized, and if you're a Lake Region patient we would make sure it gets scanned into your electronic health record.

Katie Johnson: It really can be a one-stop-does-it-all kind of session.

Deb Forstner: Yes. We've had many people that have used it just that way. Sometimes they've brought their old directive if they had a former one, maybe they had it on a form that they're not as comfortable with any more or doesn't pertain. We do have copies of our healthcare directive form online on the Lake Region website, but also

could have some hard copies there for them to complete if they haven't worked on one before. I had one gentleman come and he had several that he had done when he was a patient at [inaudible 00:03:29] in the cities and other places. We put together the best things from all the plans and updated it that way. I learn a lot from the people that come.

Katie Johnson: Even if you do have one, that's a good point. If you haven't reviewed it for a while this is a good time to just set aside to do that as well and make sure everything is up to date.

Deb Forstner: It really is. The form we have now, I've heard a lot of compliments for it. A committee before I came to Lake Region, with community input, really looked at the form, making sure it clearly communicates. Sometimes I've seen forms where people have written out their wishes. It's good, but it might be a little bit harder to determine and decipher, whereas this form has boxes to check and it still has places where you can write more information that you want to make it personal.

Katie Johnson: Sure, that leaves it a little bit less open for interpretation, probably.

Let's talk a little bit about how this initiative got started. As I understand, it's part of a grant that Lake Region Healthcare received.

Deb Forstner: Yes. Dr. Money, Bruce Money, the physician, has been our champion in this, really seeing the importance of patients having their own say in their medical decisions and for their families to be aware of what those preferences are. One of his interns had made it his project to write a Department of Human Services grant. It was very well written, very comprehensive, and that grant got submitted and then approved. We have a lot of funding from the Department of Human Services with the intent that we will increase education of people, our patients here at Lake Region, but also make it a broader scope in our whole area, in several counties, really. We have the good fortune to use that money along with Otter Tail County, who contributed a substantial share from a grant they had to train advanced care planning facilitators.

To be a good facilitator you need to know about healthcare directives, but you need to know how to help people think about what it is they want and not to make it a quick process where you're just telling people "I think this would be the best choice for you." It's not a case of telling people anything. It's of listening, drawing out what they would like, what is important to them if their time was near to the end and things like that. There was a training program we had through Honoring Choices Minnesota that trained ... I think it was 29 facilitators that got trained, new facilitators. They are county-level public health, people in long-term care facilities, whole variety of ... The Department of Aging staff came. They are now meeting with people to help them do their healthcare directives and then reporting back to me for the purposes of the grant.

Katie Johnson: Part of the grant is keeping track of what kind of impact this has made. Do we have

a goal that we're reaching for?

Deb Forstner: Yes, we would like to have at least 900 new healthcare directives in our region completed as compared to when we began, and many more referrals. We get referrals from the clinic and through the hospital and of course all these other places that are doing satellite work for us. Prairie Ridge Hospital is also very involved.

Katie Johnson: That is really making an impact on a lot of lives when you think about it that way, and hopefully making it better for everyone involved. It's better for the patient and better for the family as well.

Tell me more about who should have a healthcare directive? Is there a certain target audience, or people that it is more important to have a healthcare directive than others?

Deb Forstner: Not really, because ... At age 18 is when you can first develop a healthcare directive. Younger than that, parents will be the default to always make those decisions. From 18 on, that's especially when people are leaving home, going to college, it would be so helpful to have that healthcare directive so the people there will know "Who should I contact?" if there was an emergency. From 18 all the way through life. Situations change based on your age, your diagnosis, maybe other situations that have changed in your life as far as your living situation. Your values change according to where you're at at that point of life. Yes, there's no time limit. I've worked with some people who are doing their first healthcare directive their 90s and it's still important, very important, maybe more than ever, to really hear what it is they want at that point of their life.

Katie Johnson: Knowing that it is for everyone, I'm glad that we can say we have these ongoing sessions the second Wednesday of every month, always completely free and completely open to the public. If Wednesday at noon is not a good time for someone, there are some other options, too, though.

Deb Forstner: There are, especially with all of the different facilitators we have trained. I myself too will meet with people. Our social workers are trained here at Lake Region, but I could make a referral out to another trained facilitator, or people have met with me in my office here at Lake Region Hospital on the third floor. They could give me a call. Would it be appropriate to give out my number?

Katie Johnson: Absolutely.

Deb Forstner: My office number is 736-8077. Feel free to call, 736-8077, and leave a voice mail or get me in person and we can set up a time. People know this well, I hear this all the time, every time you come to the clinic, they're going to be asking you do you have your healthcare directive? Some people I think do it just because they don't want to be asked again, that's pretty good motivation, I guess. When you do it, it does make you feel very good. When I moved here I did not have one. I had gone

through the education to be a facilitator but I didn't take it seriously apparently, didn't apply it to my own life. When I came here I felt like I had to because otherwise I'm telling people to do something I hadn't done myself. Once I did it, I did have a real sense of relief.

Katie Johnson: Again, the second Wednesday is the free session that's open to the public. I wanted to just quickly put a save-the-date mention out there too for a public event that you've been planning with some other partners in the community that we want to make sure we get on people's calendars. We'll do a longer program about it when it comes closer. Tell us just a bit about that.

Deb Forstner: Many people probably have read the book by Dr. Atul Gawande called Being Mortal. He has been featured on a Frontline special from PBS. We have that DVD so we want to show it as a community event on the big screen over at the Broen Light & Life Auditorium on October 10th. Please save that date, we'll have many options. One will be in the morning with good treats and the viewing on the big screen, and then a panel discussion with some of our local experts, doctors, and we're hoping for even somebody that has experienced the benefits of having a healthcare directive in their family.

Katie Johnson: That sounds great. Like we said, we'll have more about that as October 10th approaches. In the meantime, the second Wednesday of any month, including tomorrow, at the Cancer Care and Research Center here on Cascade Street, 12 noon, free healthcare directive advance care planning sessions offered by Lake Region Healthcare.

Thank you, Chaplain Deb, for sharing that information with us and for being there for our community and all of these facilitators, sharing knowledge on this important topic.

Deb Forstner: Thank you, Katie. If I can just mention, on October 10th we'll do it in the morning from 9 to 11 and then again in the evening from 7 to 9, so we can get people both that work during the day and those that would be free in the morning.

Katie Johnson: Perfect. Chaplain Deb Forstner, my guest today on Apple a Day, talking about advance care planning and the importance of your healthcare directive. Chaplain Deb and Katie Johnson, here on Apple a Day reminding you there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.