

Family Caregivers, Patients and Physicians: Ethical Guidance to Optimize Relationships

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hopes of fostering mutually supportive patient-physician-caregiver partnerships and stimulating further research.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

An initial draft of a statement developed by the ACP Center for Ethics and Professionalism staff and members of the ACP Ethics, Professionalism and Human Rights Committee was discussed and subsequent revisions were made through December 2007. The draft underwent internal review by the ACP Board of Governors and ACP Councils, followed by external peer review. The paper was revised and then approved by the ACP Board of Regents in 2008. The statement was endorsed by ten medical professional societies: Society of General Internal Medicine, American Academy

should be part of routine preventive medical services with every adult patient. Patients generally wait for the physician to initiate advance care planning discussions. ²² Physicians must always be sensitive to cultural and family values, and should respect family approaches to decision-making where applicable. ²³ Declining health and advanced age mark important opportunities to solicit decision-making preferences, discuss health care values with the patient and family and allow all to gain a deeper understanding of beliefs and goals. This dialogue will better prepare the clinician and caregiver for decision making in the event it becomes neaogpn.

available, research suggests that these caregivers face additional burdens. ⁴⁵ In addition to measures that support all caregivers (e.g., reassurance that the health care team wants to achieve what is best for the patient; providing clear information on the patient's condition, prognosis and care plan; establishing a communication plan for keeping the caregiver informed), the physician should identify the patient's local support system, and make referrals for service

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