

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

To the editor: In the summer of 2003, we carried out a similar study regarding the prevalence of advance directives (ADs) in a tertiary care setting.¹ We surveyed adult emergency department patients and found very similar results to those of Gill and colleagues published in this journal.² Twenty-four percent of patients in our study had completed an AD compared to 19.3% in their study. We also found that a very small percentage of patients brought their AD with them to the emergency department (5% in our study compared to 5.6%) and that

more patients completed their ADs with the help of lawyers (55% in our study compared to 61.5%) rather than family physicians (5% in our study compared to 19.2%). We also noted that many patients kept their ADs in relatively inaccessible places, such as home offices or safety deposit boxes. The failure of this to improve over an 8-year period suggests that we need to redouble our efforts to educate the general population about the benefits of completing ADs. We also need to encourage those who have ADs to share this information with their primary care providers and to make this

information more available to emergency care providers.

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References

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2. Gill GJK, Fukushima E, Abu-Laban RB, Sweet DD. Prevalence of advance directives among elderly patients attending an urban Canadian emergency department. *CJEM* 2012;14:90-6.