

Storing Health Care Directives with an Electronic Registry Provides Peace of Mind

In the last two issues, we've provided an overview of the personal health care directives we should be discussing with our clients, and have looked in a little more detail at the newest direct – the HIPAA release.

Let's assume that your clients have indeed completed all of their directives: the living will, healthcare power of attorney, organ donor authorization (if applicable), and the HIPAA release. What's the next step? What should they do with all these important documents?

As you know, most clients do not carry their advance directives with them on their person. Instead, they file them away at home or lock them in a safe deposit box. In either case, these documents will likely not be available if they are needed by a hospital in an emergency – especially if that emergency occurs away from home while traveling. In fact, a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* found that these important directives are not available in 3 out of 4 cases when needed!

Furthermore, if healthcare directives are not immediately accessible, hospital staff may push patients to complete new directives right on the spot. These directives will likely be standard forms from the state or a medical association. These forms will typically be less protective than the directives drafted by the client's attorney, and will almost certainly contain fewer specific instructions for the care of the client.

We suggest advising clients to electronically file their health care directives with a reputable advance directives registry. Doing so will ensure that clients' healthcare directives are stored safely and – most importantly – are immediately accessible when they're needed.

Advance directive registries provide a reliable way to make clients' health care directives available to hospitals immediately – 24/7 – regardless if it's a

weekend, a holiday, or the hospital is located in some out of the way destination! So how does this work?

These health care directive registries, such as DocuBank (www.docubank.com) and others will store an electronic copy of clients' advance directives. Clients receive a wallet card with a unique identification number, which we recommend they carry alongside their health insurance card. Doctors and hospitals use this card to call the registry or go online to obtain the client's healthcare directives via fax or internet. The beauty of these registries is that they make clients' directives immediately available, anywhere in the world. They may also include emergency contact information and important medical alerts.

Storing your documents with an online registry is convenient, safe, and provides peace of mind to your clients and their loved ones. For more information, feel free to contact us. We'll talk more about evaluating and choosing a registry in a future issue.



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'Providing Peace of Mind for you and your loved ones'

If you are interested in scheduling a time for Ketra to give a seminar to your clients or an organization you belong to, please contact the office to discuss the different types of seminar Ketra is able to present.

If you are interested in providing your clients with a copy of Ketra's book 'Your Life, Your Legacy' please call the office for complimentary copies.

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