

## Advance directive fact sheet

Dear patient,

This fact sheet explains how we handle advance directives and living wills at the University Hospital Zurich.

### Living will

A living will allows you to decide who will represent you and make health care, financial and legal decisions on your behalf should you no longer be of sound mind. For every case, the adult protection authority verifies whether a person is not of sound mind, and only then does the living will come into effect. As with a last will, a living will must be handwritten or certified by a notary.

### Advance directive

As long as you are of sound mind, you will make your own decisions about your medical care based on your doctors' advice. An advance directive comes into effect when you are no longer of sound mind as the result of an accident or illness.

In case of such a situation, you can answer the following questions in advance:

- What kind of medical treatment would you prefer?
- Which treatment measures should be avoided?
- Who should act as your **authorized representative** (Swiss Civil Code Art. 378) in **decisions** regarding your medical treatment?

The stipulations made in your advance directive only apply in the event that you are no longer able to make decisions yourself. As soon as you are again of sound mind, we will discuss all upcoming treatment decisions with you irrespective of what is written in your advance directive. Providing an advance directive makes it easier for your relatives and our medical team to make important decisions. You can revoke your written stipulations and alter your treatment preferences at any time.

No one is required to have an advance directive.

### Validity of advance directives

Every person of sound mind can make an advance directive. This also applies to adolescents. All advance directives are legally valid that have been written consensually and in a state of sound mind, are related to medical treatment and are signed and dated by hand.

### Handling of advance directives at the University Hospital Zurich

All our members of staff want to respect and carry out your wishes in every situation. It is therefore important that the team responsible for your care is aware of your wishes and expectations. We therefore ask you to provide the doctor who is treating you with a **copy of your directive**. We will store the copy in our electronic patient documentation.

During your stay at the hospital we recommend that you talk to the doctor who is treating you about the **contents of your advance directive**. This way, you can be sure that the contents of your advance directive reflect your current wishes.

Should you no longer be of sound mind, our doctors and nursing professionals are obliged to take your advance directive into account. You will be treated according to your stipulations, except in cases where a medical treatment is considered futile or when the stipulations are against the law (for example, we are not allowed to prescribe medications with the aim of shortening a patient's life).

### Emergency situations with sudden loss of sound mind

It is particularly important to be aware of your current wishes in an emergency situation, in order to be able to act accordingly. If you have not made an advance directive or your wishes are not known, we will always employ life-preserving treatments. If our medical personnel are later made



aware of your advance directive, we will incorporate your wishes as quickly as possible and adjust any treatments that have already begun. Your authorized representative must be informed of any changes to your treatment and must consent or refuse medical measures in your behalf.

## Creating an advance directive

To ensure that an advance directive is valid and reflects your wishes as closely as possible, please be aware of the following point:

### Necessary information

- Identification information (first name, last name, date of birth, address)
- Naming of an authorized representative with first name, last name, address, relationship. Ideally, you should name at least one other person as a substitute.
  - If you name multiple authorized representatives, you should either specify an order or explicitly state that the persons named should make joint decisions.
- **Proof of sound mind**
  - Use the formulation: “Being of sound mind, and following careful consideration, I hereby decree the following...”
  - We recommend obtaining a doctor’s signature to avoid uncertainty in cases where your soundness of mind might be called into question (e.g. in the initial stages of dementia or in the case of mental illness).
- Stipulations for general medical treatment and especially for an emergency situation
- Place, date and signature

### Desirable information

- If you are already ill, you should mention this in the advance directive and address the possibility of complications and treatments.
- Describe your personal values and your quality of life.
- Record any personal beliefs, fears and expectations that might be significant for medical decisions.
- State the treatment goals you would like to reach.
- Describe clearly and comprehensibly which medical treatments you desire and which you decline.

### Additional information

- Your personal feelings regarding organ donation.
- Desires regarding the use of your body after death (yes or no to autopsy).
- Your personal feelings regarding participation in research projects.

The clearer your stipulations are formulated, the higher the likelihood that you will be treated accordingly.

## Updating advance directives

It is important that the advance directive reflects your current wishes. We therefore recommend that you re-examine your advance directive on a regular basis. If your personal circumstances, views and/or state of health has changed, you should reassess your directive and alter it if applicable. Always mark these changes with the appropriate date and your signature.



## Advice on advance directives

Please note that advance directives should not normally be drawn up under time pressure. When drafting an advance directive, we ideally recommend that you seek advice from a qualified professional rather than doing it alone. The University Hospital Zurich also offers certified [ACP \(Advance Care Planning\)](#) advice.

- ACP – “planning for future health care together” is an internationally-developed concept for advanced health care planning. Trained advisors will support you in drawing up an advance directive that best reflects your wishes and that is medically feasible.
- If you should wish to draft an advance directive during your stay at the University Hospital Zurich, please ask the doctor who is treating you or contact:

## Social services

Administrative office  
sozialdienst@usz.ch  
+41 44 255 22 11

