

## Who Will Be Making Your Difficult Healthcare Decisions?

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A recent article in the LA Times reminds us of just how important it is to have some kind of living will or advanced healthcare directive, and that it is absolutely necessary to talk about these things with your loved ones. If you have not done these things it is your loved ones who will be left to make the painful and terrible decisions about your medical treatment and possibly even the heart-wrenching DNR determination.

The author writes of his father—chronically ill, stroke survivor, suffering from mild but advancing dementia—who is currently staying in a nursing home, “where they’ve put him on a diet of pureed foods and thickened liquids, but he often refuses to eat, demanding to be taken home and fed the home cooking he’s always loved. It’s hard to tell him that may never happen, and that his options are increasingly grim. If my dad can’t eat, a feeding tube will be his only choice. Other than giving up the fight.”

The family is now struggling to decide if a feeding tube is the right course of action, what their father would (or does) want, and how involved he should be in the decision considering his current state of mental health. “We worry... that with mild but advancing dementia, my father won’t be able to fully comprehend the implications of being fed through a tube implanted in his gut. And if he declines it, is he competent to make that decision?” These are the heart-breaking decisions that can leave loved ones asking themselves for years after, “Did we do the right thing?”

We often shy away from talking about these issues with our family members and loved ones. We think that they are too sad, too depressing, or too far into the future to worry about yet. The only thing that can make these decisions even the tiniest bit easier, however, is knowing for certain what your loved one would want; and the only way to know for certain is to talk about your feelings with your family, and to put your wishes in writing with a living will or healthcare directive. Our office can help you do this.

More often than not the best that can be hoped for in a situation like the one discussed above is that some measure of peace is attained. We wish this for the author of the article and his family, and we wish this for any of our readers involved in similarly difficult and painful circumstance.