

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: End-Of-Life Discussions Don't Impact Survival, Study Says

Living wills also don't change survival rates.

Open dialog about hospice use and other end of life issues is getting a boost from a new study.

Contrary to claims thrown around by politicians and others, "discussing and documenting patients' preferences for care at the end of life does not cause them any harm," finds a new study published in the October issue of the Journal of Hospital Medicine. The study followed 356 patients admitted at three different hospitals from 2003 to 2009. The patients had low or medium risks of dying within one year.

"During the study, there were no differences in survival for patients who had an end-of-life discussion and those who had not," says the study headed up by physician **Stacy M. Fischer** of the **University of Colorado School of Medicine**. "There also were no survival differences for those who had a living will in their medical record and those who did not."

"The term 'death panels' has sparked considerable controversy recently. It has undermined the efforts of clinicians who provide end-of-life care by scaring patients into thinking that their lives may be cut short for their families' or society's best interest," Fischer says in a release about the study. "We hope our study provides data to help inform the national debate about advance directives."

The study will be available online at www.journalofhospitalmedicine.com.