INJECTING SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY INTO ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

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Communication and conversation among an individual, loved ones and a health care provider are essential to effective advance care planning (ACP). The most common approach to ACP currently anchors to rigid paper forms. However, Web-based educational and assistance tools are being developed to help an individual successfully engage in ACP.

Web-based social technology (eg, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+) currently enables groups of people to communicate efficiently with members and transfer, store, maintain and update various forms of information (eg, text, audio, pictures, video). Consequently, new social technology is now being developed for ACP to leverage these innovative communication tools.

Social technology for ACP works by connecting together networks of individuals to easily share and access text, audio and video wishes. People generally have difficulty initiating ACP conversations, and social technology can have a normalising effect that stimulates ACP conversations by creating a common place to engage in ACP. Once a conversation is initiated, ACP social technology provides dynamic Web-based tools for recording, sharing and maintaining wishes over a lifetime. In emergencies, health professionals can immediately gain access to wishes made available by the patient.

Current foreseen limitations will diminish over time. The elderly will become increasingly computer and Internet savvy, and younger generations are becoming more aware of ACP. If multiple ACP social technology platforms become widely used, cross-communication among various platforms is possible.

As the world’s population ages and exponential growth of technology continues, innovations like social technology can help people more effectively engage in ACP communication.