**SUGGESTED TOPICS TO DISCUSS**

**WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE AGENT**

Before having your health care agent sign any forms, you should discuss your beliefs and wishes with him or her. When instructing your health care agent about your wishes in the event you become incapacitated and they need to make health care decisions, we suggest you consider the following questions. We suggest no particular answers. Each person should answer these questions based on their own beliefs and convey those beliefs and wishes to their health care agent. Any other wishes or desires that you feel your health care agent should know should also be given to them so that they can carry out their responsibilities as you would wish.

1. Do you think it is a good idea to sign a legal document that says what medical treatments you would want when you are dying? (This is called a "living will.")

2. Do you think you would want to have any of the following medical treatments performed on you?

* Kidney dialysis (if your kidneys stop working).
* Cardiopulmonary resuscitation, also called CPR (used if your heart stops beating).
* Respirator (used if you are unable to breath on your own).
* Artificial nutrition (used if you are unable to eat food).
* Artificial hydration (used if you are unable to drink fluids).

3. Do you want to donate parts of your body to someone else at the time of your death? (This is called organ donation.)

4. How would you describe your current health status? If you currently have any medical problems, how would you describe them?

5. If you have any health problems, in what ways do they affect your ability to function?

6. How do you feel about your current health status?

7. If you have a doctor, do you like him or her? Why?

8. Do you think your doctor should make the final decision about any medical treatments you may need?

9. How important is independence and self-sufficiency in your life?

10. If your physical and mental abilities were decreased, how would that affect your attitude toward independence and self-sufficiency?

11. Do you expect that your friends, family and others will support your decisions regarding medical treatment you may need now or in the future?

12. What will be important to you when you are dying (physical comfort, no pain, family members present)?

13. Where would you prefer to die?

14. What is your attitude toward death?

15. How do you feel about the use of life-prolonging measures in the face of terminal illness?

16. How do you feel about life-prolonging measures in the face of a permanent coma?

17. How do you feel about the use of life-prolonging measures in the face of an irreversible chronic illness, like Alzheimer's disease?

18. What is your religious background?

19. How do your religious beliefs affect your attitude toward serious or terminal illness?

20. Does your attitude toward death find support in your religion?

21. How does your faith community, church or synagogue view the role of prayer or religious sacraments in an illness?

22. What else do you feel is important for your agent to know?

If over time your beliefs or attitudes in any area change, you should let your Health Care Agent know. You should also let your health care agent know of any changes in your health. In the event you are informed of a terminal illness, you should discuss this with your agent. How well your agent performs depends on how well you have prepared him or her.

[Prepared by Duke Health Justice Project (919) 613-7169]