

# HEALTH CARE AND END-OF-LIFE CHOICES

## Fact Sheet

According to the  
Institute of Medicine,  
the nation's health  
care system will need  
to undergo  
**FUNDAMENTAL  
CHANGES**  
as the proportion of  
older adults in the U.S.  
grows.

### EXPERTS



**Susan Enguidanos,  
PhD, MPH**

Health care, palliative care,  
hospice care, end of life  
decisions, death and dying

[enguidan@usc.edu](mailto:enguidan@usc.edu)



**Cleopatra Abdou, PhD**

Health disparities,  
stereotype threat in health  
care settings, human  
flourishing, healthy aging,  
maternal health

[cabdou@usc.edu](mailto:cabdou@usc.edu)



**Edward Schneider, MD**

Healthy aging,  
polypharmacy, alternative  
medicine, costs of long-  
term care, nursing care,  
assisted living, home  
health care

[eschneid@usc.edu](mailto:eschneid@usc.edu)

**ADVANCED DIRECTIVE:** Also known as a living will, an advance directive documents a person's wishes regarding medical treatment in the event they can't communicate their wishes themselves.

- Only about **ONE THIRD** of adults have an advance directive expressing their wishes for end-of-life care. [AARP]
- A 2011 Time/CNN poll found that **70 PERCENT** of Americans want to die at home—however, **70 PERCENT** of the population is dying in hospitals, nursing homes or long-term care facilities. [CDC]



**PALLIATIVE CARE:** Specialized medical care for people with serious illness that focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of that illness and improve quality of life.

- Unlike hospice care, which aims to provide symptom relief and comfort during end of life, **PALLIATIVE CARE IS APPROPRIATE AT ANY STAGE** in a serious illness and can be provided alongside disease treatment.
- The USC Davis School and Blue Shield of California recently received a \$5 million contract from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute to provide and study outpatient palliative care. Earlier studies have suggested that palliative care is associated with **IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE, FEWER HOSPITALIZATIONS** and **LOWER COSTS**.
- Upon learning what palliative care is, **97 PERCENT** of individuals state that they would want to receive it in the event of a serious illness. [Time/CNN]



### HEALTH CARE STEREOTYPE THREAT:

When individuals with stigmatized identities—race, socioeconomic status, gender, age, sexual orientation, or even weight or maternal age—worry about being judged by a stereotype in healthcare settings, causing anxiety and affecting their healthcare experience.

- A USC-led study showed that people who experienced health care stereotype threat were **MORE LIKELY** to have hypertension, to be depressed, and to rate their own health more poorly.



### POLYPHARMACY:

The simultaneous use of multiple medications.

- The chance of an adverse drug reaction is **90 PERCENT** in patients taking more than eight prescriptions. [American Academy of Family Physicians]
- More than **ONE THIRD** of prescription drugs in the U.S. are taken by older adults. The average elderly individual is taking more than **FIVE** prescription medications; a nursing home patient is taking **SEVEN** medications on average. [AAFP]

