

# The Question Project

*Matching healthcare to patients' goals*

**[thequestionproject.org](http://thequestionproject.org)**

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your **patients** about  
advance directives

**yourself** the  
"surprise" question

Learn **how** to ask the questions at  
**[thequestionproject.org](http://thequestionproject.org)**

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# The Question Project

- An intensive educational campaign to engage primary care providers around advance directives and early palliative care
  - Ask all patients to complete advance directives
  - Ask “the surprise question” and refer appropriate patients for palliative care

# Rationale

- Studies suggest that physicians' lack of understanding is a barrier to encouraging patients to complete advance directive.
- Patients expect their physicians to initiate discussion of advance directives
- An intervention to change physician behavior was effective in increasing advance directive completion

Morrison RS et al Ann Int Med 1994; Johnston S et al Ann Int Med 1995; Wissow LS et al JGIM 2004

# Rationale

- Palliative care has many benefits for patients, families, and the health care system:
  - Improved communication
  - Improved symptom management
  - Decreased healthcare utilization
  - Reduced hospital costs
  - May also increase survival
- The “surprise question” is a simple way for providers to determine which patients might benefit from palliative care.

Casarett D et al J Am Geriatr Soc 2008; Morrison RS et al Arch Int Med 2008; Temel JS et al NEJM 2010

# The “Surprise” Question

- Would you be surprised if your patient died in the next year?
  - If not, palliative care referral and advanced care planning would be appropriate

# Objectives

- To raise awareness of the importance of advanced directives and early palliative care amongst primary care providers
  - Encouraging primary care providers to ask all patients about advanced directives
  - Introducing the “surprise question” to a broad audience as a way to screen patients for palliative care
  - Provide basic training in primary palliative care to interested physician leaders statewide
- To raise public awareness of advanced directives

# The Question Project

## Multidisciplinary Team

- Susan Merel, MD
  - Geriatrician and palliative care consultant
- Carol Kummet, LICSW, MTS
  - Palliative care social worker
- Chris Knight, MD
  - Outpatient general internist
- Rowell Llanillo
  - Graphic designer



# Campaign Elements

# Recruitment process

- Inspirational CME events to activate providers
  - Including appearances by patients telling their stories about advance directives or palliative care
  - Presentations by leaders in the field introducing the basics of primary palliative care
  - Hands-on workshops in advanced directive completion
- Email campaign to primary care providers
- Direct outreach to opinion leaders in healthcare institutions encouraging their involvement

# Campaign elements

- Campaign website with links to resources
  - Links to palliative care resources
  - Links to advanced directives
- Bracelet sent to providers to remind them to ask their patients about advanced directives and consider early palliative care in appropriate patients
- Bracelet for patients who have completed advanced directives
- Website address on both bracelets
  - [thequestionproject.org](http://thequestionproject.org)

**Ask**  [thequestionproject.org](http://thequestionproject.org)



**Tell!**  [thequestionproject.org](http://thequestionproject.org)



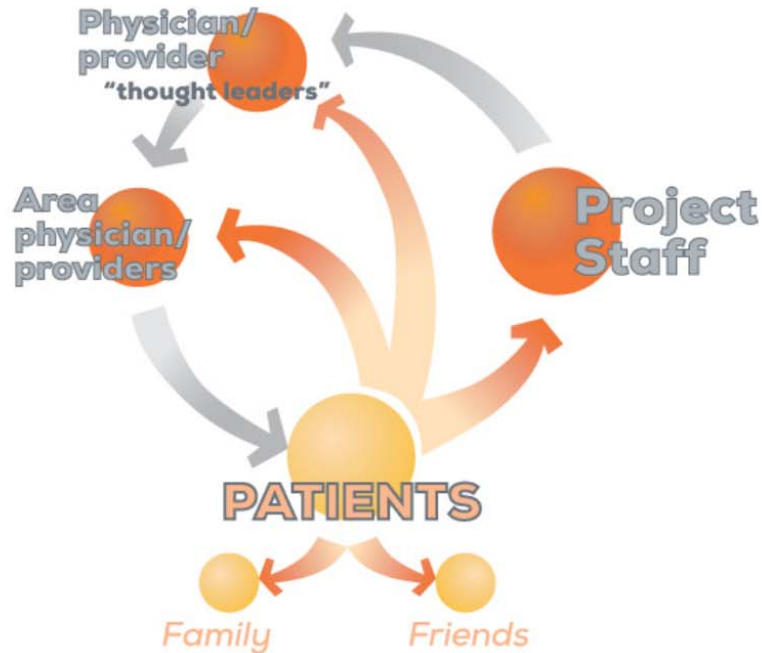
# Campaign Structure

Project staff organizes CME events, recruit “thought leaders” amongst area physicians

Physician leaders recruit and inform colleagues

Physicians/providers educate patients; discuss advance care planning with all patients and palliative care with appropriate patients; distribute bracelets

Patients educate their family/friends and refer them to the website and/or their primary care provider when they ask them about the bracelet



CME events to include information about palliative care and the importance of advance care planning, tailored to the cultural and health needs of the local population

# Measurement

- Project staff would help individual clinics develop measurement systems to evaluate the effect of the intervention
- Incentives could be provided by individual clinics or systems
- Data would be shared centrally so that best practices could be celebrated and reproduced

## **Providers,**

have you asked your patients about advance directives? Do you know their wishes if they become seriously ill?

## **Patients,**

do you know who you want to make decisions for you if you cannot? Have you shared with your medical team what is important to you?

*It's time to talk about advance directives and palliative care.*

## **The Question Project**

builds on the provider - patient partnership to ensure the healthcare provided is consistent with the patient's goals and values.

**If you *don't* ask,  
they might not *tell*.**



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