

# Advance Directives Make Wishes Clear

May 24, 2018

While no cure currently exists for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, new treatments have begun to emerge as researchers make progress into the mechanisms behind the disease. Elder Care Alliance is committed to supporting innovation and research that improve quality of life for older adults, especially those living with dementia.

## The Impact of Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease of the brain that impairs cognition, behavior and memory. Early symptoms often are confused for typical signs of old age. However, contrary to what many people believe, the disease is not simply a normal function of aging.

As the disease progresses, symptoms include mood swings, problems with language, loss of long-term memory and confusion. Because the disease has no cure, individuals with Alzheimer's become dependent on care partners — most often spouses or other close family members.

## The Role of Advance Directives

Individuals with Alzheimer's often live for a decade following diagnosis, and many fear that their wishes for their care will not be accommodated as their condition progresses. By creating a simple legal document known as an advance directive, people with Alzheimer's can clarify their wishes for their health care.

Without an advance directive in place, care partners are forced to choose the care options that they believe the individual with Alzheimer's would want. In some cases, family members disagree, and the issues related to care become contentious and affect relationships.

[End of Life Washington](#) has created an Alzheimer's and Dementia Mental Health Advance Directive as a guide for care partners, family members, medical professionals and others assisting individuals with Alzheimer's. The directive was created in collaboration with a clinical law professor at Seattle University and was reviewed by a panel of senior care specialists. If you wish to use the directive document, be sure to consult with your own attorney.

Source: ElderCare Alliance