Implementation of Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment

Janette N. Evans, RN, MS, ANP-C, Lisa S. Ball, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, and Camille P. Wicher, PhD, Esq., MSN, RN

Background: When an outpatient in a northeastern cancer institute requested a Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) form, the state’s approved resuscitation form in all settings, none were available. A project was undertaken to institute MOLST forms into policy and routine practice. Research supports early discussions of end-of-life care in patients with cancer and the use of MOLST as an effective tool.

Objectives: The purpose of this article is to discuss the initiation and facilitation of MOLST implementation into practice and policy at a cancer institute.

Methods: Introducing, overcoming resistance to, piloting, and adopting MOLST in an oncology setting is reported and explained based on the three stages of Lewin’s Theory of Planned Change: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing.

Findings: A small pilot of MOLST with palliative care providers demonstrated the feasibility and suitability of using MOLST in the oncology setting. MOLST was adopted into policy and routine practice at the cancer institute.

Advance directives were developed so patients may communicate decisions regarding end-of-life (EOL) care and treatment before they are unable to do so, but their usefulness is limited because they are not legally binding documents. The Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) was developed so that decisions regarding life-sustaining measures can be placed in an actionable order that is recognized across healthcare settings and by emergency responders. The purpose of this article is to discuss the initiation and facilitation of MOLST implementation into practice and policy at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in New York based on the three stages of Lewin’s (1947) Theory of Planned Change: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing.