

**A TEACHABLE MOMENT:** *John McCain's Decision Not To Continue Medical Treatment.*

Before he died, John McCain made the decision not to have additional medical treatment for brain cancer he battled fiercely, letting nature take its ultimate course. It was a courageous decision by a courageous man. But it raises the question, “why would anyone make such a choice?”

Certainly, it is a very personal and, in most cases, private decision, but it is a responsible choice. Here's why. Absent orders from the patient or a designated health care proxy to the contrary, providers are obligated to keep a patient alive with any means possible. Regardless of consequences. Regardless how poor the quality of life of the patient. Regardless of cost. Regardless of the burden on the patient's family.

Many people will reach a point in life where quality of life becomes preferable to quantity of life. Treatment can become so invasive, so painful or such a financial burden that we choose to terminate medical care aimed at extending our life.

Honoring Choices® Tennessee is an organization with the goal of educating Tennesseans about how to prepare for the day when they might wish to discontinue medical treatment, much as John McCain and his family elected to do.

One key instrument in our battle to honor the choices of every patient is an Advance Directive. Every adult Tennessean, regardless of their age, should discuss such health care decisions and document their choices so they and the ones they love can enjoy greater peace of mind.

Research shows the vast majority of people would rather spend their final days at home surrounded by friends and family, rather than being “poked, prodded and infused” in a clinical setting. The average hospital stay for patients who do not have an advance directive is three times greater than those who have an advance directive.

So, in many ways, we can all honor the legacy of Senator McCain by creating our own advance directive for health care treatment. It is a great gift to those we love--for our family members, for our caregivers, for our friends. Honoring Choices Tennessee has made it easier than ever. Visit [www.advancedirectivesTN.org](http://www.advancedirectivesTN.org) to learn more.

If you are an employer providing health benefits for your team, you probably are about to enter a renewal period. Our research conducted among working age Tennesseans shows they believe their employers' human resources and benefits departments should be a good source of information about advance directives.

You can, at no cost, conveniently offer your employees the opportunity to create advance directives for themselves or their families. We will help you if you simply reach out to us at [help@advancedirectivesTN.org](mailto:help@advancedirectivesTN.org).

Moments like the death of Senator McCain are very poignant and we all face them in our lifetimes. But, these moments offer us an opportunity to learn and take steps that will improve quality of life for us and the ones we love. The final days of John McCain provided such a moment.