Advance Directive Checklist for the Emergency Department

A resuscitation pause is when providers take a “time out” to ensure that all care team members—including the patient and family—are clear about the patient’s prognosis and preferences of care. Physicians can use the A-B-C-D-E checklist to pause, ensuring that patient wishes are understood.

Provider Checklist
- **Ask** patients or caregivers about the intention of the advance directive.
- **Be clear** about the patient’s condition—differentiating terminal, non-treatable conditions from critical, treatable ones.
- **Communicate** clearly with patients and care team members if you feel a patient’s condition is reversible and/or treatable.
- **Discuss** next steps with patients or caregivers using an action plan to determine how to respond to a patient’s wishes under critical conditions.
- **Explain** to all involved in a patient’s care—from family members to the care team—that it is okay to withhold or withdraw certain care if it correlates with the patient’s perceived wishes. This can set the stage for discussions around hospice or palliative care.

Source: Ferdinando Mirarchi, MD

Family Checklist
- **Announce** to the medical team that you have an advance directive (e.g., a living will, DNR, health care power of attorney).
- **Be clear** with the medical team about your intentions for treatment in the face of executing the advance directive.
- **Communicate and Coordinate** with family members to ensure everyone understands the treatment plan.
- **Discuss** next steps.
- **Explore** the benefits of palliative and/or hospice care.

Source: Ferdinando Mirarchi, MD