

Standards for Decision Making Capacity

Appelbaum & Grisso, NEJM 319:1635-1638, Dec 22, 1988

- 1. Ability to communicate a choice**
Unimpaired level of consciousness,
willingness to express a choice,
reasonable stability of choice
- 2. Ability to understand (and retain)
relevant information**
Patient can recapitulate: current
condition, plans being discussed,
potential consequences of the various
options
- 3. Ability to appreciate the situation and
consequences of a decision *for oneself***
Patient acknowledges illness (when
present) & general probabilities of
risks and benefits as they apply to
him or herself
- 4. Ability to manipulate information
rationally**
Patient reaches conclusions that are
logically consistent with the starting
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Key information to provide for decision making:

1. Medical condition and prognosis
2. Recommended intervention & alternatives
3. Risks and benefits of each option
4. Consequences of decision

Tube Feeding in Advanced Dementia Does Not:

1. Decrease risk for aspiration
2. Prolong survival
3. Promote wound healing
4. Increase comfort

Useful references on tube feeding:

Finucane TE, et al. Tube feeding in patients with advanced dementia: a review of the evidence. JAMA. 1999 Oct 13;282(14):1365-70.

Gillick MR. Rethinking the role of tube feeding in patients with advanced dementia. N Engl J Med. 2000 Jan 20;342(3):206-10.

Dharmarajan, TS, et al. Percutaneous Endoscopic gastrostomy and outcome in dementia. Am J Gastroenterology. 2001; 90:2556-2563.

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