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STUDY: GAME COULD BE KEY TO ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Large Majority of Players Took Action After Playing “My Gift of Grace”

May 12, 2015 – PHILADELPHIA – Medical researchers have found that playing a game may help motivate large numbers of people share and record their advance care plans. An astounding 74 percent of participants who played the conversation game [My Gift of Grace](#) in the study went on to perform a least one advance care planning activity within ten weeks. Participants took steps including filling out advance directives and discussing their personal wishes with loved ones in the weeks after they played the game. Players also reported that the conversations during game play were realistic and satisfying.

The study's lead researcher, Lauren Jodi Van Scoy, M.D., a critical care doctor at the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and assistant professor of medicine and humanities, Penn State College of Medicine, said the results show that the game may be a viable healthcare intervention. She was recently awarded a Parker B. Francis Foundation grant from the American Thoracic Society to study the effects of the game in a larger randomized controlled trial.

“With the increasing availability of sophisticated medical advances, patients and families may be confronted with tough choices about medical treatments for patients nearing the end-of-life. Engaging in meaningful conversations about values and preferences for medical care *before* illness strikes is key for improving the end-of-life experience of patients and families – which is why we are excited by the conversations we’ve studied during this research study,” said Dr. Van Scoy. “Our study found that people who play My Gift of Grace engage in satisfying and impactful end-of-life conversations that seems to motivate them to increase their readiness to perform advance care planning.”

Americans need help starting these conversations. A recent national survey revealed that 70 percent think it’s a good idea to complete advance directives to record their end-of-life wishes, but only 20 percent have done so. Dr. Van Scoy's research shows that playing this game can introduce these topics and help ensure that the ensuing conversations are productive. She is presenting the study, along with a companion study showing the feasibility of a method for scoring the quality of conversations, at the International Conference of the American Thoracic Society May 17 in Denver.

“My Gift of Grace is about helping people live and die well, but it does not have a point of view about what any individual's wishes should be,” said Nick Jehlen, one of the game's designers, and a partner in The Action Mill, which sells it as part of a platform of tools to aid conversations about difficult topics. “The important thing is that these conversations take place.”

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About My Gift of Grace

My Gift of Grace was created by The Action Mill, a Philadelphia-based design firm that uses innovation to improve communication about serious illness and death.

Link to Behavior Change study: <http://tiny.cc/ttmstudy>

Link to Multiple Goals Analysis study: <http://tiny.cc/mgastudy>