Exploring Health Care Decision-Making of Older Adults: Consistency and Clarification of Responses Over Time

By

Vicki C. Martin

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
Human Development

APPROVED:

Karen A. Roberto, PhD
Rosemary Blieszner, Ph. D.
Kusum Singh, Ph. D.
Linda Hulton, Ph. D.
Michelle Stevenson, Ph. D.

Defense: October 12, 2004
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Decision-making, Values, Stability, Older Adults
This study investigated the stability of health care decisions and the influencing values of 21 competent older adults. Face to face interviews were conducted initially (T1) followed by taped, telephone interviews seven years later (T2). Each participant was presented with a list of value indicators from which they were asked to identify the five most influential values to their health care decision-making process. They were also instructed to make decisions regarding five health care treatment and five life-sustaining treatment scenarios across two health states and three different levels of prognosis. Using open ended questions, participants described why they would or would not consent to medical or life-sustaining treatments. No significant change in healthcare decisions was found for life-sustaining treatments over the seven year period. The only significant change for health care treatments was an increase in the proportion of individuals “not consenting” to hip replacement surgery from T1 to T2 regardless of health state or prognosis. Similarly, change occurred between T1 and T2 with more participants refusing cataract surgery with a prognosis of 50/50. High stability was noted with the values selected by participants. Four out of the top five values selected at the initial interview were also selected seven years later. Data from the interview transcripts revealed congruence between the values chosen on the values inventory and those described as factors determining whether or not consent was given to the medical or life-sustaining treatments at T1 and T2.
DEDICATION

To my loving husband, Ben….thank you for your endless encouragement and support through the very difficult, motivationally dry times of this endeavor. You realized my potential and helped me keep the vision for my professional future and the possibilities of growth that could be endless. You shouldered much of the stress of a busy, growing family so that I could concentrate on the end-product of my work…the Big “D”.

To my boys, Matthew, Andrew and Tyler….thank you for giving me something to work for and for your belief that “Mom could do it!” My prayer for you is that you will see through me that endurance, persistence, and faith in the One who sustains us can get you through ANYTHING that life presents. You boys are my joy and truly my biggest accomplishments! I love you!

To my fabulous parents, Gene and Linda Clinedinst and my incredible sister, Carol Clinedinst….thank you for your faith in me. You have pushed, pulled, prayed and pumped me up through my entire life and this was no exception. You have always wished for me to dream big and to not quit! I hope I have made you proud in so many ways, but especially now. Thanks for the love, financial support, prayer support and the living room furniture ☺!

To my mentor and chair, Dr. Karen Roberto….I can never thank you enough for believing in me and pushing me to completion! I have admired and have attempted to emulate your rigor in teaching, scholarship and service. You are the greatest and I am privileged to have studied under you!
Most importantly, I dedicate my life’s work to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

“To God Be The Glory, Great Things He Has Done!”
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