

# Medical consultation for advance directive and health care proxy

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## Background

Since 2009 a new law strengthens the legal position of advance directives in Germany. As a result we observe an increasing attention for advance directives. Beside notaries, general practitioners (GPs) are the preferred contact person to help compose this important document.<sup>1,2</sup> To date this

advisory service is not being paid by the statutory health insurance. Therefore no reliable data are available concerning doctor's advice for writing an advanced directive or health care proxy. Especially data concerning GP's perception are missing.

## Aim

The questionnaire measures frequency, length and occasion of doctor's advice to write a proxy.

## Methods

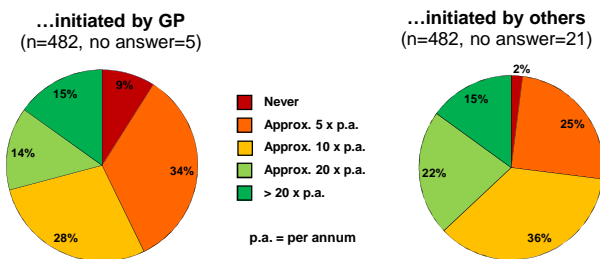
959 GPs with academic teaching practices in North-Rhine Westphalia were surveyed with a questionnaire which had been pretested with cognitive interviewing techniques. Measures reported here include:

- Frequency of doctor's advice using a 5-point scale from "never" to "> 20 times per annum"
- Initiation by doctor vs. patient/others
- Estimated duration of counselling in minutes

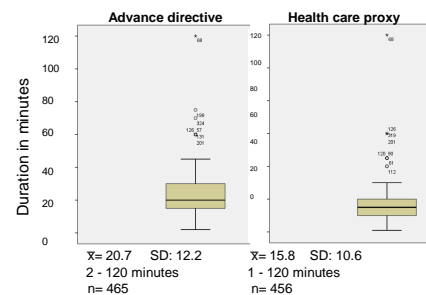
## Results

482 physicians answered the survey (50.3% response). The average age is 53.8 years, 70% are male, the average GP experience is 18 years in practice.

### Frequency of doctor's advice (initiated by GP vs. others)



### Estimated duration of doctor's advice



### Whom do GPs offer this advice?

Special patients = 337 (70%)

Chronically sick people	317 (94%)
Pensioners / elders	225 (67%)
Start-ups	19 (6%)
Motorcyclists	15 (5%)
Extreme sportsmen	14 (4%)
Others:	53 (16%)

### GP's own documents (n=482)

	Own advance directive	Own health care proxy
Yes	45%	43%
No	52%	50%

## Discussion

This study shows a picture of the way of GPs advise for writing advance directives and health care proxies. These provisions are a relevant topic for GP's, they document the advice in a very good way, many different material

is used and GP's with their own proxies indicate the advice more frequently. Matters that still have to be resolved are about the quality of GP's advice and the implementation of improvement measures.

### Literature

- <sup>1</sup>Bundesärztekammer (2013). Umgang mit Vorsorgevollmacht und Patientenverfügung in der ärztlichen Praxis. Deutsches Ärzteblatt;33-34:A1580-85.  
<sup>2</sup>Harringer, W (2012). Patientenverfügung in der Hausarztpraxis. Therapeutische Umschau;69(2):107-09.

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