LaPOST ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF ADVANCE CARE PLANNING CONVERSATION GUIDEBOOK

Baton Rouge, La. – March 26, 2013 – In recognition of National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD), the Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (LaPOST) Coalition announces the release of “Conversations Change Lives: A Guidebook to Advance Care Planning.”

NHDD, observed April 16, 2013, is a national initiative focused on raising awareness about the importance of advance health care decisions. The LaPOST Coalition is partnering with other community, state and national organizations to encourage patients to express their health care wishes through the use of advance directives and health care power of attorney documents.

In Louisiana, patients with serious advanced illnesses may also use the LaPOST document to record their care wishes with a physician’s order. Approved by the Louisiana Legislature in 2010 as Act 954, the LaPOST document is an initiative of the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to reshaping health care in Louisiana.

The LaPOST document is based on effective communication of the wishes of patients with life-limiting illnesses, a promise by health care professionals to honor these wishes and documentation of the corresponding medical orders on a brightly colored form. It is complementary with advance directives and is completely voluntary. The document is biased neither for nor against treatment and transfers with the patient across health care settings.

To help patients discuss end-of-life care wishes with their loved ones, and to provide information about advance care planning documents such as the advance directive, the health care power of attorney and the LaPOST form, the LaPOST Coalition developed the “Conversations Change Lives” guidebook. The guidebook was officially unveiled March 12, 2013, during “Community Conversations on Compassionate Care” in Baton Rouge, an event that stressed the importance of advance care planning for those with serious advanced illnesses.

According to Susan Nelson, MD, Chair of the LaPOST Coalition, the ‘Conversations Change Lives’ guidebook helps patients identify their goals of care and prepare their thoughts before beginning the discussion with their loved ones about their end-of-life wishes.
“When you have a serious advanced illness, it may be difficult to discuss what types of medical treatments you do or don’t want as your illness progresses, but without these conversations, your family may not know your wishes, and you may not receive the kind of care at the end of life that you want,” Nelson explains. “The guidebook is an invaluable tool that may help make these conversations less difficult.”

To learn more about LaPOST or to download the “Conversations Change Lives” guidebook or the LaPOST document, visit www.la-post.org. To learn more about NHDD, visit www.nhdd.org.

**About the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum**
The Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum is a private, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to advancing evidence-based, collaborative initiatives to improve the health of Louisiana residents. Its focus areas include quality measurement and analytics, clinical quality improvement, Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (LaPOST), the patient-centered medical home/care coordination model, outreach/education and health information technology (IT). The Quality Forum supports health care providers and critical access/rural hospitals as they adopt and meaningfully use electronic health records and serves as the State-Designated Entity to implement and manage Louisiana’s health information exchange. For more information, visit www.lhcqf.org.

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