

DSAC Chair's Report

Mike Volpe

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As many of you know, I recently spent 4 days in the hospital due to aspirational pneumonia. I went to the emergency room 3 times in a week for the same symptoms in order to be admitted to the hospital where I could receive IV antibiotics. I was misdiagnosed with bacterial pneumonia and bronchitis, which delayed my being treated with the correct antibiotic, and during this time my pneumonia got worse. I finally was admitted with the correct diagnosis and started to receive the correct antibiotic. Fortunately my body was able to fight off the pneumonia and heal itself once the correct antibiotic was prescribed.

A team of three doctors was assigned to give me correct treatment while I was on the hospital. They started visiting me daily and I needed to be cognitively aware of my situation so I could speak to the doctor's intelligently. The doctors came in at unannounced times and not always when I was in a good position to talk rationally. I was asked questions like "Do I want to do a feeding tube?" which would avoid the possibility of aspirating on food and drink. I always answered with a resounding "no" when I was asked this question. I have stated clearly in my advanced directives that I do not want a feeding tube due to the lower quality of life that I feel would come as a result of using said feeding tube. There is certain treatment that I have clearly stated in my advance directives that I do not want such as: a ventilator, kidney dialysis, and resuscitation if I stop breathing. I also need to be aware that there are very simple things that I can do in my daily life that will lower the risk of contracting aspirational pneumonia again in the near future. I need to be very conscious of my swallowing habits when I am drinking or eating which will help me to lower the number of times that I aspirate. This is and will continue to be a challenge, but I feel I need to try and accomplish this challenge to extend the quality of my life as much as I can.