

Project Summary: Transforming End-of-Life Care Through ePOLST Implementation

The [Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment \(POLST\) Paradigm](#) was designed to improve patient care and reduce medical errors by creating a system using a portable medical order form (aka “POLST Form”) that records patients’ wishes for use across settings of care. It is an approach to end-of-life planning based on conversations between health care professionals (HCPs) and seriously ill or frail patients nearing the end of life about their current diagnosis, prognosis, treatment options (including benefits and burdens) and goals of care. The HCP documents the decisions made in this/these conversations as medical orders on a brightly-colored POLST Form. The original POLST Form is given to the patient, a copy is kept in the patient’s medical record and, in Oregon, a copy is sent to the [Oregon POLST Registry](#) (a secure electronic database allowing HCPs access to POLST orders) unless the patient opts-out. During a medical emergency, POLST Form orders can be easily located either by using the patient’s original document or by calling the Registry.

[Oregon Health & Science University](#) (OHSU) is Oregon’s only comprehensive public academic health center. My project is to help OHSU implement an electronic POLST system that will allow for electronic completion, transmission and retrieval of POLST Forms, as well as automatic submission to the Registry.

Since one-third of OHSU patients come from outside the metro area, portability of advance care planning documents is greatly valued. The default in medicine is to provide all treatments in a medical crisis, putting patients at risk to be hospitalized or receive treatment s/he did not want solely because the POLST Form was improperly completed or unable to be located. Incorporating the POLST completion process into OHSU’s electronic medical record system will improve the ease and accuracy with which an HCP can both complete a POLST and retrieve it during a medical crisis, thus ensuring patient wishes are documented, known and honored.