

ADVANCED CARE PLANNING

If your choices for future health are known, they can be respected

About 85% of people will die after chronic illness, not a sudden event. This means that most people will benefit from considering the type of care that they would want during that illness, particularly near the end of their lives.

Up to 50% of Australians will not be able to make or express their own decisions when they are near death. Doctors and family members will be unaware of any treatment preferences at this time if these have not been discussed and recorded earlier.

Often, families are unaware of their loved one's views about what they would want done when too ill to speak for themselves. Families often feel burdened by the concern that they will make a wrong choice.

If there is not a clear statement of a person's wishes, doctors must treat them in the most appropriate way. This can mean aggressive treatments that the person might not have wanted.

Many people are now kept alive under circumstances that are not dignified and this can cause unnecessary suffering.

Advanced care planning is a series of steps you can take to help you plan for your future health care.

Advanced Care Planning is an important process. It involves talking with friends and loved ones about your future health care wishes, documenting what you may or may not want and it can include appointing a substitute decision maker. It enables you to take control of your future health care and treatment if you are not able to communicate your wishes.

Advanced care planning is based on:

- Making sure that people are fully informed about their illness and treatment options
- Giving people the opportunity to reflect upon, and discuss with their loved ones, their future and the way this will be managed by health professionals
- Assisting people to clarify their views regarding acceptable and unacceptable outcomes if their condition deteriorates
- Supporting people to record their views and to appoint a trusted substitute decision-maker
- Providing training to doctors, nurses and allied health workers so that they can discuss advance care planning with people and their families
- Providing a comprehensive system for documenting and communicating health care choices
- Developing a clear and easy to understand information materials which explain advance care planning

Please contact the NUM or Practice Nurses for further information on (02) 60763200