

Who should I choose to make decisions for me?

The person(s) you nominate as your Medical Enduring Power of Attorney is called your agent (and your alternate agent). They should be someone who you trust, who will listen carefully to your values and wishes for future care and someone who will be comfortable making decisions in difficult situations. Usually the nominated agent is a family member, but it can be anyone you trust.

Do I need a lawyer to complete an Advance Care Plan?

No. The law does not require you to have a lawyer to complete your Advance Care Plan.

Can my Advance Care Plan be changed or revoked?

Yes. You can change or revoke your plan at any time.

When is an Advance Care Plan used?

It is only used if you are unable to make your own decisions.

What if I become ill or I am injured while I am away from home?

Discuss your choices with your agent and family and make sure that they have a copy of your Advance Care Plan.

What happens in an emergency?

In an emergency, life-sustaining measures may be started. Following discussions with your agent and family, treatment can be stopped if it is clear that it is not what you would have wanted.

How to complete your Advance Care Plan:

- 1 Think about the values that are important in your life.
- 2 Think about your current health and possible future health problems.
- 3 Think about what you would want from future medical care.
- 4 Talk to your family about these issues.
- 5 Talk to your doctor about these issues.
- 6 Choose a Medical Enduring Power of Attorney (who becomes your agent).
- 7 Meet with your agent and the Respecting Patient Choices Consultant to discuss and complete your Advance Care Plan.
- 8 Provide copies of your Advance Care Plan to your family, your agent, hospital and local doctor and anyone else whom you feel is appropriate.

If you have questions or would like to discuss Advance Care Planning, please call our help desk on 5226 7006 between 9.00am - 12.30pm Monday - Friday.

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ADVANCE CARE PLANNING INFORMATION BOOKLET

If we know your choices for
future health care, we are able
to respect them



Advance Care Planning ensures your future
medical treatment is in safe hands.



Imagine if...

You are in a road accident and you suffer a severe brain injury, or you have had a severe stroke, which leaves you permanently unconscious. You have no awareness of your environment, yourself or other people and are reliant on others for all your needs. It is not expected that you will regain consciousness but, with full time nursing care, you will be kept alive for an indefinite period of time.

or

You are diagnosed with a dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, your thinking and behaviour is affected. You are unable to understand what happens to you or communicate the treatment you want if you developed a serious illness.

or

You have incurable cancer or another serious progressive disease and your heart stops beating (cardiac arrest).

What treatments would you want, or not want, in these situations?

It is helpful for your family and those caring for you to know your values in life and attitudes towards medical treatment.

A dilemma

Mary is an independent 84-year-old widow. She is fairly healthy and enjoys the company of her children and grandchildren.

Since her husband died a year ago, Mary has tried to tell her family her thoughts about medical treatment and what is important to her. She wants to "just go quietly, with no fuss and none of those machines". However, her family responds with, "Now Mum, don't be talking like that", so she decides not to raise it again.

Mary has a stroke at home. Her family are shocked by her sudden deterioration. She is unconscious and the doctors at the hospital are talking about putting a tube down into her lungs and attaching her to a breathing machine. This gives Mary's family hope; they are desperate to have her back home.

One of the doctors explains that Mary is unlikely to recover consciousness and if she does, she will be unable to speak, feed herself or attend to the most basic personal tasks.

The doctor explains that it may be kinder to Mary if they take away the machines and provide comfort care, so that she dies peacefully. He is seeking the family's thoughts – did they know what Mary might have wanted? Had she ever talked about her choices if this sort of situation occurred?

This creates a dilemma for Mary's family. They had never really paid attention to this sort of discussion. Some of Mary's children want everything done, whereas others believe that she wouldn't have wanted all this technology.

Why plan in advance?

There may be circumstances where you would want all treatments that can possibly be offered to you and those where you may feel strongly about not being treated with certain things like tube feeding, a breathing machine, antibiotics, blood transfusions, dialysis or cardiac massage.

Planning your care in advance gives those caring for you the opportunity to respect your choices. Discussing your choices can be a comfort to you now and a comfort to your family in the future.

Advance Care Planning is talking about your choices.

Advance Care Planning enables you to clarify your values and choices and discuss the treatment you

would want with your family and your doctor. This planning becomes especially relevant if you are seriously ill and cannot make decisions yourself.

Advance Care Planning is writing down your choices.

A written Advance Care Plan helps people to accurately remember what you want and makes it easier to communicate these wishes to doctors and nurses who do not know you. It includes appointing a Medical Enduring Power of Attorney and a statement of your choices.

Thinking and talking about dying may be uncomfortable, but we need to plan how we want to live near the end of our lives to ensure our wishes are met.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does an Advance Care Plan help?

It helps you to think about and talk to your family and doctor about future medical care if you become seriously ill. A written guide is provided for family and doctors to follow.

Who do I talk to?

Talk to those closest to you. A close or loving relationship does not always mean that the other person knows or understands your wishes for future medical care.

Talk to your doctor. They may assist you to make sure your Advance Care Plan is clear and complete. Give your doctor a copy of your completed Advance Care Plan.

Talk to a Respecting Patient Choices Consultant and they will help you to discuss these issues with your family and doctor.