

Who would you trust to make your important medical treatment decisions?

If you were too sick or injured to have your say about your healthcare, who would do it for you?



Speak up about your preferences today – so they will be respected tomorrow

Start **advance care planning** today:

Appoint someone to speak on your behalf

This person will be your **medical treatment decision maker**.

They will make medical treatment decisions for you, if you are too sick to do it yourself.

They must consider any preferences you have spoken about or written down.

Chat to your medical treatment decision maker, family and friends about what matters to you

Also talk to your doctors or other healthcare professionals about how your health needs might look in the future.

Put it in writing in an advance care directive and have it witnessed – it's now a legal document

This can include one, or both, of the following:

- an **instructional** directive, which allows you to give consent to, or refuse, specific medical treatments
- a **values** directive, which allows you to more generally describe your preferences and values for future medical treatment.

These need to be witnessed and signed by a medical practitioner.

Speak to your GP or **visit** betterhealth.vic.gov.au/havetheconversation

Have you thought about what you would want if...

You were in a road accident, suffering a severe brain injury, or you had a severe stroke, leaving you permanently unconscious, reliant on others for all your needs.

- Or -

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

- Or -

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

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

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

A dilemma:

Mary is a fairly healthy, independent 84 year old widow who enjoys the company of her children and grandchildren. She 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 and her family are shocked by her sudden deterioration. She is unconscious and the hospital doctors 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.

The doctor 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, allowing her to die 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 as they never really had this discussion. Some of Mary's children want everything done, whereas others believe that she wouldn't have wanted all this technology.

What next?

Further information and documents are available via the following websites:

- www.advancecareplanning.org.au
- www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

It is recommended you visit:

www.myvalues.org.au and complete the short survey which assists in identifying your values and what is most important to you. A report is produced which may be printed out or inserted into the Victorian Advance Care Directive.

Contact Barwon Health Information & Access Service on ph: 1300 715 673.

Request information regarding Advance Care Planning (ACP). An ACP pack will be sent to you which contains the relevant documents, instructions and checklists. If you decide to complete an ACD:

- It is important to discuss with your family, doctor and others you are close to, what is most important to you if you were ever in a situation where you could not make medical treatment decisions for yourself.
- You can complete the ACD yourself or request assistance as needed.
- Barwon Health ACP program provides experienced staff to assist with the process of discussion and documentation if required.

Barwon Health ACP Program

Ph: 03 4215 7723 | Fax: 03 4215 7796

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