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GET THE CARE YOU WANT, NOT THE CARE YOU DON'T WANT, AT THE END OF LIFE

National Advance Care Planning Week is the perfect time to make plans for your future medical care

National Advance Care Planning Week (22-26 March 2021) is the perfect time to make plans and discuss with loved ones the care you want at the end of your life, the AMA said today.

Identifying what matters most and stating preferences now ensures you get the care you want, not the care you don't want, if you become too sick to make decisions for yourself.

Advance care planning can help you clarify what "living well" means and consider who you'd like to speak for you, if you can't speak for yourself.

"Thinking about a time when you can no longer speak for yourself can be very confronting but that's why it's important to start having these challenging conversations now," said AMA Vice President, Dr Chris Moy, who is also an ambassador for Advance Care Planning Australia (ACPA),

"Most of us expect to have a say in our medical treatment, however a sudden event, or gradual health decline can leave people without a voice or a choice, if no plan is in place.

"We know about a third of us will end up unable to make our own end-of-life medical decisions but less than 15% of Australians have an advance care directive.

"This means millions of Australians are unaware they have given up their ability to control their own destiny should they lose decision-making capacity.

"This leaves their loved ones with the burden of making heart-breaking decisions blindly. No family should have to go through that," said Dr Moy.

Making an advance care plan ensures your values, beliefs and preferences are known to guide those who will make health care decisions on your behalf.

The AMA agrees with ACPA that advance care planning also improves ongoing end-of-life care and provides personal and family satisfaction resulting in less anxiety, depression, and stress for families.

Dr Moy said having a conversation with your GP can be a good place to start.

"Your GP, in particular, can assist with advance care planning by discussing your current and possible future health situations, helping to clearly articulate preferences and regularly reviewing your advance care plan with you.

"If you already have an advance care plan, fantastic - use National Advance Care Planning Week to revisit and update it and don't forget to tell your GP and substitute decision-makers of any changes you make and where to find it too," said Dr Moy.

The ACPA website <https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/> guides people through the process of advance care planning and provides a range of resources, in a variety of languages. This year it has a specific section on how COVID-19 affects advance care planning.

The AMA's Position Statement on End of Life Care and Advance Care Planning 2014 can be found at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/end-life-care-and-advance-care-planning-2014>.

National Advance Care Planning Week is an initiative of ACPA, a national program funded by the Department of Health and administered by Austin Health.

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