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Palliative Care much more than end of life care

The AMA welcomes this year’s National Palliative Care Week, running from today Sunday 23 May until Saturday 29 May. Supported by Palliative Care Australia, this year’s theme, *Palliative Care. It’s more than you think*, raises awareness of the potential of palliative care to give people the chance to live as well as possible for as long as possible.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the week celebrated the dedication of all health professionals and volunteers working in palliative care. He said many people thought of palliative care as additional support at the end of a person’s life but said it was “so much more”.

“Palliative care is for people of all ages, including children, who have been diagnosed with a serious life-limiting illness which cannot be cured - it is not just end of life care. For some people, palliative care is beneficial from the time of diagnosis, helping to manage symptoms and is given alongside treatments provided by other doctors.

“Palliative care is not just provided in hospital, but in the home, hospice, aged-care facilities and through GPs. It treats physical symptoms as well as emotional, spiritual and social concerns while also providing practical assistance and emotional support for family members and carers,” Dr Khorshid said.

He said the AMA “strongly advocates for equity of access” across Australia to appropriate palliative care, as well as respite care, bereavement support, carers’ support and other relevant services to patients and their family members and carers.

Dr Khorshid said governments should strive to improve end of life care for all Australians and adequately resource palliative care services and advance care planning, including enhanced palliative care services, supporting GPs, other specialists, nursing staff and carers in providing end of life care to people across Australia.

“The AMA also strongly supports advance care planning, a process of planning for a person’s future health and personal care by ensuring their values, beliefs and preferences are known, should they lose capacity in the future. Advance care planning enables people to identify ‘what matters most’ ensuring they get the care they want, not the care they don’t want, at the end of life,” Dr Khorshid said.

For more information on National Palliative Care Week, visit the Palliative Care Australia website at <https://palliativecare.org.au/national-palliative-care-week-2021>

For relevant AMA policy, refer to the AMA’s *Position Statement on End of Life Care and Advance Care Planning 2014* at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/end-life-care-and-advance-care-planning-2014>.

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