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## **Plan for your future health during National Advance Care Planning Week**

National Advance Care Planning week, 21 to 27 March 22, an initiative of Advance Care Planning Australia, is a reminder for Australians to talk to their loved ones about who they would want to speak for them if they become too sick to speak for themselves.

Advance Care Planning Australia ambassador and AMA Vice President Dr Chris Moy said while advance care planning conversations might be confronting, they are important.

“Advance care planning is a process of planning for your future health and personal care by ensuring your values, beliefs and preferences are known to guide those who will make health care decisions on your behalf, should you lose capacity in the future,” Dr Moy said.

“Without such a plan, you may have no voice to guide those decisions and no choice as to what decisions are made on your behalf, instead placing the burden of decision-making on loved ones who may have no idea what care you would actually want - which can bring a legacy of guilt on families which extends after death.

“The AMA strongly supports advance care planning as it benefits everyone, the patient, their family, carers and health professionals and is particularly important for people with advanced chronic illness, a life-limiting illness, who are aged 75+ years or at risk of losing competence.

“The AMA strongly agrees with Advance Care Planning Australia that having an advance care plan can reduce anxiety, depression, stress and increase satisfaction with care for the patient’s family members. In addition, advance care planning assists healthcare professionals and organisations by reducing unnecessary transfers to acute care and unwanted treatment,” Dr Moy said.

Advance Care Planning Australia has found less than 15 per cent of people have documented their health care preferences in an advance care directive.

“Your GP, in particular, can assist with the planning process by discussing your current and possible future health situations, helping you to clearly articulate your preferences, and regularly reviewing your advance care plan with you,” Dr Moy said.

Dr Moy said advance care planning discussions, and clearly delineating ‘goals of care’, should become a key part of routine healthcare conversations across Australia.

He said the [Advance Care Planning Australia](http://www.advancecareplanningaustralia.com.au) website is an excellent resource for individuals, families, friends, carers and health professionals.

The AMA’s Position Statement on End of Life Care and Advance Care Planning can be found [here](#).

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