

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

39 Brisbane Avenue, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604

Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499

Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



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Matters of life and death should be discussed and normalised

The Australian Medical Association says National Palliative Care week, running from 21–27 May, is a good time to have important conversations about death and dying with loved ones.

The AMA welcomes this year's National Palliative Care Week with the theme: 'Matters of Life and Death' and its special focus on the palliative care workforce and volunteers who support patients and families living with a life-limiting illness.

The palliative care workforce consists of a wide range of integrated and multidisciplinary services including general practitioners, specialist palliative medicine physicians, other medical specialists, palliative care nurses and pharmacists as well as other allied health professionals and support staff.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said each of these groups, together with volunteers, plays a unique and vital role in supporting people with life-limiting illness to receive comprehensive, patient-centred care throughout their illness, both in the home and in health care settings like hospitals, aged care facilities and palliative care facilities.

"Death, dying, and bereavement are all unavoidable and integral parts of life, but we struggle with them. Even for health care professionals, reflecting on and discussing death with patients and their families can be profoundly confronting and difficult.

"We need to be able to have open and frank discussions and be educated about death and dying, so we can normalise and encourage discussion on these topics, both in the medical profession and in the wider community.

"There is a lot to understand about the role and purpose of palliative care, advance care plans, non-beneficial treatment, caring and bereavement. We could all be better prepared if we took the time to look into these issues and what it means for families. National Palliative Care Week is the perfect time to do this."

The [National Palliative Care Week website](#) profiles a range of health professionals and volunteers highlighting their experience and life lessons in supporting patients and their families with life-limiting illnesses.

The [AMA's Position Statement on End-of-Life Care and Advance Care Planning 2014](#) lays out what good quality end-of-life care should look like.

Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 | media@ama.com.au

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