

PALLIATIVE CARE



End-of-life care is the care given to people who are likely to die within the next 12 months. There is a growing need for high-quality end-of-life care, with GPs playing an important role in helping patients with this diagnosis to live as well as possible. Sometimes this may include the palliative care needs of advanced life-limiting conditions such as dementia, chronic heart failure, type two diabetes, Parkinsons and motor neuron diseases. For any patient, a palliative approach should be considered when you would not be surprised if they died within the next 12 months i.e. [the 'surprise' question](#).

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RACGP) supports patient-centred decisions in end-of-life care, and respects that this may include palliative care and/or requests for voluntary assisted dying (VAD).

It is important to realise that VAD is a separate practice from palliative care. For additional information, refer to Palliative Care Australia's position statement: [Palliative Care and Voluntary Assisted Dying Position Statement](#).

As the [population ages](#) and [chronic diseases](#) become more prevalent, improving palliative care has become an [Australian Government priority](#). It is important to note that an estimated 60 to 70 per cent of Australians would prefer to die at home, and therefore, GPs and other primary healthcare providers play an integral role in helping to fulfill these wishes.

Many patients tend to wait for their doctor to raise this topic and appreciate their doctor's willingness to discuss their values and concerns, with the goal of improving their quality of life. Continuity of care and optimal end-of-life care is often delivered by a multidisciplinary team in a shared-care arrangement. In many cases, this will be coordinated through a general practice and may be augmented by specialist palliative care services where needed.

Patients are up to four times more likely to die in their preferred setting when GPs are informed of their preference in the end-of-life phase. Following a patient's death, their GP is usually involved in providing bereavement care to family and carers.

Terms:

Palliative care aims to improve the quality of life of patients with life-limiting illnesses, in which GPs play an important role.

End-of-life care is an important part of palliative care. It describes the care and services given to people who are nearing the end of their life, as well as their carers/families. It often involves bringing together health professionals to help patients to live out their life as comfortably as possible.

Advance care planning helps to ensure loved ones and health providers know what matters most to the patient and their treatment preferences. Ideally, advance care planning will result in the patient's preferences being [documented in a plan](#) known as an **advance care directive** and the appointment of a [substitute decision-maker](#) to help ensure preferences are respected.

It is particularly important for patients who are:

- older
- have a chronic illness
- have multiple diseases
- have an early cognitive impairment
- are approaching the end-of-life.

Palliative care

Quality improvement	<p>The Model for Improvement (MFI) and Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles provide a framework to help develop, manage and test quality improvement activities.</p> <p>Please contact your Quality Improvement Consultant for assistance with identifying change ideas for your practice.</p>	<p>Some QI ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recall patients aged 75 years or older for health ax - an opportunity to screen for chronic disease and palliative care needs. Discuss advanced care planning (ACP). Recall patients with multiple chronic conditions - ACP. Home medication or multiple medication reviews - ACP. Check patients with life-limiting conditions - ACP. Check dementia patients - ACP. Improve practice team knowledge of ACP and palliative care. Increase timely referral to palliative care.
Murray HealthPathways	<p>Murray HealthPathways aims to guide best-practice assessment and management of common medical conditions, including when and where to refer patients, with guidance on what information is needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New palliative care patient Symptom control in palliative care Palliative care referrals Advance care planning (ACP) Voluntary Assisted Dying (VIC) Voluntary Assisted Dying (NSW)
PIP QI	<p>Details on how to use PIP QI reports is available on the Pen CS website.</p>	<p>Practice Incentives Program - Murray PHN CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</p>
PENCS	<p>CAT 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify active patients with at least three visits in the last two years Identify all active patients with at least one chronic condition who are eligible for a Medication Review <p>Follow instructions to the disease tab count – congestive heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dementia Patients and Carers Identify all active patients with at least one chronic condition who are eligible for a Medication Review

Clinical resources

<p>RACGP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palliative and end-of-life care • Palliative care approach • Illness trajectories • Education Modules - End-of-Life Essentials • Aged care clinical guide (Silver Book) • Advance care planning
<p>Clinical guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palliative care Safer Care Victoria • Anticipatory medicines Safer Care Victoria • Care plan for the dying - Victoria Safer Care Victoria • NSW versions of the following - Blue book from ACI • End of life and palliative care Agency for Clinical Innovation
<p>Professional education</p>	<p>Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA): Australia's only free health placements in palliative care services and free palliative approach workshops.</p> <p>There are a number of courses and training programs to help build your skills in palliative care. These include:</p> <p>Primary care training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA) • Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) • Indigenous Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (IPEPA) • Advance Project • End-of-life Essentials • End of Life Law for Clinicians • Care Search • Palliative Care Outcome Collaboration - Primary care <p>Online palliative care training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) • End of Life Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC) • Gwandalan National Palliative Care Project: educational and training materials to support relationships between service providers, frontline staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. • Palliative care education and training Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care • Primary Care Toolkit – End of Life Directions for Aged Care • National Palliative Care Standards for All Health Professionals and Aged Care Services - Palliative Care Australia <p>Aged care training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-of-Life Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC) • Palliative Care Curriculum for Undergraduates (PCC4U) • Equip Aged Care Learning Package • Talking End of Life ...with people with intellectual disability (TEL) • palliAGED • Palliative Aged Care Outcomes Program • Linkages Program - ELDAC

<p>Care Search for GPs and nurses</p>	<p>Care search support GPs in delivering quality palliative care across the life course. It brings together guidance on terminal prescribing for specific symptoms and evidence-based information on key care issues. See https://www.caresearch.com.au/Health-Professionals/General-Practitioner for more information.</p> <p>GPs:</p> <p>CareSearchgp app replaces the palliagedgp app, which will no longer be supported after 1 June 2024. You can find out more here.</p> <p>The app is an evidenced-based tool that includes plenty of information and links to referral forms for some regions: https://www.caresearch.com.au/Health-Professionals/Settings-of-Care/Primary-Health-Care/Pathways-and-Frameworks/Referral</p> <p>Nurses:</p> <p>Nurses - Health Professionals (caresearch.com.au)</p> <p>Palliative care knowledge network provides trustworthy and practical resources relevant to your practice.</p>
<p>Peak bodies:</p>	<p>Palliative Care Australia (PCA) is the national peak body for palliative care</p> <p>Palliative Care Victoria</p> <p>Palliative Care NSW</p>
<p>Supportive and Palliative Care Indicators Tool (SPICT)</p>	<p>SPICT is a free, online and evidence-based clinical tool to help clinicians identify people at risk of deteriorating due to advanced, progressive or life threatening conditions.</p> <p>Access SPICT</p>
<p>Advanced care planning</p>	<p>Advance care directives differ between states and territories. Some state and territory governments have specific forms that you can use.</p> <p>Advance Care Planning Australia website</p> <p>To make an Advance Care Directive, you can use the Advance Care Directive for adults form. The following guide, Instructions for completing the Advance care directive for adults, can also help you complete the form.</p>
<p>Anticipatory medicines</p>	<p>Anticipatory medicines are prescribed to a person with a life-limiting illness to manage symptoms such as pain, nausea and breathlessness.</p> <p>Anticipatory medicines can be safely used in the home to support the wishes of people who choose to be cared for and/or die at home.</p> <p>Anticipatory medicines Safer Care Victoria</p> <p>A consensus-based list of medicines suitable for the management of terminal symptoms in community and residential aged care facilities in Australia</p>
<p>Medication: PalliMEDS app - 2023 VERSION NOW AVAILABLE</p>	<p>The palliMEDS app is free. It familiarises primary care prescribers with eight palliative care medicines that have been endorsed by the Australian & New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM) for management of terminal symptoms.</p> <p>Apps for health professionals</p>
<p>SafeScript resources</p>	<p>A dedicated SafeScript Training Hub is available with updates on training, general information and other references and resources.</p> <p>e: it.safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au t: 1800 723 379</p>

<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders</p>	<p>It is not uncommon to refer to 'death and dying' as <i>'sorry business, sad business, finishing up, final days, final footsteps/final footprints, journey, pathway or going back home or to the dreaming.'</i></p> <p>Similarly, the term 'palliative care' is not easily translated in the many and diverse languages spoken in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (IPEPA): Palliative Care Education Toolkit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professionals • Printable version / PDF • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Discussion Starter – Working Out What's Right For You - Palliative Care Australia • Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care: CareSearch - • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Care • The free caring@home Indigenous app includes a suite of tailored, best practice, culturally-appropriate resources for health professionals, and Indigenous families and carers.
<p>Paediatric palliative care</p>	<p>New 'Green Book' available for paediatric palliative care: A Practical Guide to Palliative Care in Paediatrics.</p> <p>This guide addresses the many and varied aspects of caring for dying children and their families, including pain and symptom management, practical support, psychosocial issues, bereavement support, communication and available resources.</p> <p>VIC: Palliative care: The Victorian Paediatric Palliative Care Program</p> <p>This program runs a consultation-liaison team responsible for the facilitation of care of children with palliative care needs and their families.</p> <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palliative Care Australia • Monash Children's Hospital • Very Special Kids • Royal Children's Hospital <p>NSW: NSW Paediatric Palliative Care for further information.</p> <p>Education and Training Resources (quocca.com.au)</p> <p><i>Quality of Care Collaborative Australia (QuoCCA)</i> deliver paediatric palliative care education to health professionals who may care for children and young people with palliative and end-of-life care needs.</p>	
<p>Residential aged care</p> <p>ELDAC (End of Life Directions for Aged Care)</p>	<p>ELDAC toolkits can help you in providing palliative care and advance care planning to older Australians.</p> <p>Toolkits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary care • Home care • Residential aged care 	

Residential Aged Care Home (RACH)	General practitioners (GPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caresearch.com.au • palliAGEDgp app: This smartphone app supports GPs who are caring for older palliative patients living at home or in residential care. Available for free to download from online app stores: Apple App Store or Play Store for Android
	Nurses	palliAGEDnurse app: This app helps nurses working in residential aged care, community care and general practice to care for older people with palliative care needs. Available for free to download from online app stores: Apple App Store or Play Store for Android
Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)	On 1 November 2023, new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Level E items for general attendance consultations of 60 minutes or more by GPs were introduced.	<p>MBS Online - MBS Online</p> <p>Other items you may use include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyday care: 23, 36,44 • Patients in RACH: 90035, 90043, 90051 • Health Ax: 699, 701- 707, 715 • Home medication reviews: 900 • CDMP (GPMP): 721, 723, 729, 732 patients in RACH: 731 • Practice nurse chronic disease: 10987, 10997. • Case conference: GP organises: 735, 739, 743. GP participates: 747, 750, 758. May include pain management. • Prolonged and critical condition: 160-164 • Mental health treatment Plans: Consultation = 27134; MHTP = 2715, 2717, 2700, 2701; RV MHTP = 2712 • RACH Ax: 701, 703, 705, 707 • RMMMR = 903; care plan contribution = 731; prolonged critical condition attendance = 160164 • WIP: Nurses and aboriginal health workers can provide ACP support, follow up interventions under WIP funding.
End-of-life law	<p>End of Life Law for Clinicians (ELLC) training program.</p> <p>This free national training program includes 12 online modules on fundamental aspects of end-of-life law and is complemented by End of Life Law in Australia, a website about the law in each state and territory. Register through the training portal.</p> <p>Certificates of completion and CPD points are available.</p>	

Information for patients/carers

Patient and family support

- [Getting started guide: Advance Care Planning Australia](#)
- [I am a Carer - Palliative Care Australia](#)
- [New Carer Booklet Resource available - Palliative Care New South Wales \(palliativecare.nsw.org.au\)](#)
- [Family/ Carer Resources \(caringathomeproject.com.au\)](#)
- [Patient / Carer Information \(quocca.com.au\)](#)
- [Very Special Kids](#): Provides holistic palliative care for children and young people with life-limiting conditions, and tailored support for their families through life, death and bereavement.

For further information or support, please contact your local [Quality Improvement Consultant](#), email: gpsupport@murrayphn.org.au or visit the general practice support page on our [website](#).