

## 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 twelve months, i.e. [the 'surprise' question \(367kb pdf\)](#).

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 - Palliative Care Australia](#)

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 the willingness of their doctor to discuss their concerns and values, 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 that GPs can help to address.

**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:** 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.

**Voluntary assisted dying (VAD)** is when someone has medical assistance to end their life because they have an advanced medical condition that causes intolerable suffering.

Currently, VAD is available in all states and territories except the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory. [Voluntary assisted dying | healthdirect](#)

## Palliative Care

<p><b>PDSAs – Quality improvement</b></p>	<p>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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check patients aged 75 years or older with a health care plan (HCA).</li> <li>• Check patients with multiple chronic conditions.</li> <li>• Check cancer patients.</li> <li>• Check dementia patients.</li> <li>• Increase the number of the above items with a health assessment = an opportunity to screen for chronic disease and palliative care needs.</li> <li>• Improve practice team knowledge of ACP and Palliative Care</li> <li>• Increase ACP for priority patients.</li> <li>• Increase timely referral to palliative care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Murray HealthPathways</b></p>	<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"> <li>• <a href="#">New palliative care patient</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Symptom control in palliative Care</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative care referrals</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Advance care planning (ACP)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Voluntary Assisted Dying (VIC)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Voluntary Assisted Dying (NSW)</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>PIP QI</b></p>	<p>Details on how to use the PIP QI reports is available on <a href="#">the Pen CS website</a>, <a href="#">CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients with GPMP with complex needs.</li> <li>• Patients aged 75 years and older with existing chronic conditions associated with high-risk of death.</li> <li>• Patients in residential aged care homes (RACH).</li> <li>• Patients with cancers more likely to be life limiting.</li> </ul> <p>These cohorts may benefit from screening for potential palliative care needs.</p>
<p><b>PENCS</b></p>	<p>CAT 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Identify active patients with at least 3 visits in the last 2 years - CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Identify all active patients with at least one chronic condition who are eligible for a Medication Review - CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a> Follow instructions to the disease tab count – congestive heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Dementia Patients and Carers - CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Identify all active patients with at least one chronic condition who are eligible for a Medication Review - CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Identify all active patients with at least one chronic condition who are eligible for a Medication Review - CAT Recipes - PenCS Help</a></li> </ul>

## Clinical Resources

<p><b>RACGP</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative and end-of-life care</a></li> <li>• Overview of ACP and link to Position Statement <a href="http://racgp.org.au/guidelines/advancecareplans">racgp.org.au/guidelines/advancecareplans</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative care approach</a></li> <li>• Illness trajectories: <a href="#">attachment.aspx (1055x549) (racgp.org.au)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Advance care planning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Education Modules - End-of-Life Essentials (endoflifeessentials.com.au)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">RACGP aged care clinical guide (Silver Book)</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Clinical guidelines</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative care   Safer Care Victoria</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Anticipatory medicines   Safer Care Victoria</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Care plan for the dying - Victoria   Safer Care Victoria</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">NSW versions of the following - Blue book from ACI</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/palliative-care">https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/palliative-care</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Supportive and Palliative Care Indicators Tool (SPICT)</b></p>	<p><b>SPICT</b> 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>You can assess them for unmet supportive and palliative care need.</p> <p>Access SPICT <a href="#">The SPICT™ – SPICT</a></p>
<p><b>Social prescribing</b></p>	<p>Patients and carers are more likely to ask for support from their friends and family when their GP/nurse or other trusted professional tells them that social and practical care is as important as medical care. The Healthy End of Life Program (HELP) app has been developed by La Trobe university <a href="#">Health Professionals   Healthy End of Life Program</a></p>
<p><b>Advance Care Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The Advance Project Overview</a> is a national program funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care to support general practices to integrate advance care planning and palliative care with everyday clinical practice: <a href="#">Advance care planning explained   Advance Care Planning</a></li> <li>• Find the Advance Care Directive form, and instructions for completing it, at this <a href="http://health.vic">health.vic</a> page.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Advance care planning forms (health.vic.gov.au)</a></li> <li>• Advice: <a href="#">National Advance Care Planning Support Service</a></li> <li>• Learn more about <a href="#">starting the conversation</a></li> <li>• Learn more about the <a href="#">advance care planning process</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Advance Care Planning Australia</a> and <a href="#">The Advance Project</a> run education events and offer online training</li> <li>• <a href="#">Online courses   Advance Care Planning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Events and webinars   Advance Care Planning</a></li> <li>• Office of the Public Advocate – For information on Advance Care Directives and assessing decision-making capacity <a href="http://publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/medical-treatment/patient-consent/patient-capacity-to-consent">publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/medical-treatment/patient-consent/patient-capacity-to-consent</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Death Notifications</b></p>	<p>Death notifications are not part of the advance care planning process. To find information about this, we recommend visiting the <a href="#">Australian Death Notification Service</a></p>

<p><b>Voluntary Assisted Dying</b></p>	<p>A GP's involvement in voluntary assisted dying will be determined by personal, cultural and religious beliefs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical practitioners must complete voluntary assisted dying training, before conducting an eligibility assessment for voluntary assisted dying. <a href="http://health.vic.gov.au">Voluntary assisted dying training for medical practitioners (health.vic.gov.au)</a></li> <li>• Doctors should register for an account with the <a href="#">Voluntary Assisted Dying Portal</a></li> <li>• All forms required under the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 can be accessed, completed and submitted through the <a href="#">Voluntary Assisted Dying Portal</a></li> <li>• The training can be accessed at <a href="http://vicvadlearninghub.com">vicvadlearninghub.com</a></li> <li>• End of Life Law in Australia <a href="#">QUT - Voluntary Assisted Dying</a> provides information on VAD laws both in Australia and internationally, and their intersection with palliative care and medical treatment decision-making.</li> <li>• <a href="#">VAD: Victoria</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">VAD: NSW</a></li> <li>• <b>Victorian Department of Health training videos:</b> These videos were developed as part of the VAD training for medical practitioners. They are intended to assist medical practitioners to understand VAD in practice, including examples of how medical practitioners may have some conversations with patients about it, plus further explanation about how to assess some key factors. They can be accessed <a href="#">here</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>End Of Life Law</b></p>	<p><b>End of Life Law for Clinicians (ELLC) training program.</b></p> <p>This free national training program comprises 12 online modules on fundamental aspects of end-of-life law and is complimented by <a href="#">End of Life Law in Australia</a>, a website about the law in each state and territory.</p> <p>Register through the <a href="#">training portal</a>.</p> <p>Certificates of completion and CPD points are available</p>	
<p><b>Therapeutic Guidelines</b></p>	<p>Access this link for Therapeutic Guidelines: Palliative Care (Version 4)</p> <p><a href="#">Therapeutic guidelines &gt; Therapeutic Guidelines   Therapeutic Guidelines (tg.org.au)</a></p>	
<p><b>SafeScript resources</b></p>	<p>A dedicated <a href="#">SafeScript Training Hub</a> is available with updates on training, general information and other references and resources.</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:it.safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au">it.safescript@dhhs.vic.gov.au</a> T: 1800 723 379</p>	
<p><b>Professional education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://pepaeducation.com">Home - PEPA (pepaeducation.com)</a> Australia's only free health placements in palliative care services and free palliative approach workshops.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative care education and training   Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Centre for Palliative Care</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative Care Online Training</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative care journals</a></li> </ul>	

	Palliative care videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Understanding the role GPs play in community palliative care (27 September 2023)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Deferred care session 3: chronic disease management, healthy ageing and palliative care (27 September 2022)</a> (Palliative care commences at 1:07:22)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Palliative care – How, when and where to refer (3 April 2019)</a></li> </ul>
	Paediatric Palliative Care	<a href="#">Quality of Care Collaborative Australia</a>
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 . Level E items mirror the structure of the existing MBS Level A – D general attendance items, and include items for face-to-face consultations in rooms, out of rooms, in residential aged care facilities, during both business and after hours, and telehealth (video only) consultations.	<a href="#">MBS Online - MBS Online</a> Other items you may choose to use include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday care: 23, 36,44</li> <li>• Patients in RACH: 90035, 90043, 90051</li> <li>• Health Ax: 699, 701- 707, 715</li> <li>• Home medication reviews: 900</li> <li>• CDMP (GPMP): 721, 723, 729, 732 patients in RACH: 731</li> <li>• Practice nurse chronic disease: 10987, 10997</li> <li>• Case conference: GP organises: 735, 739, 743. GP participates: 747, 750, 758. May include pain management.</li> <li>• Prolonged and critical condition: 160-164</li> <li>• Mental health treatment Plans: Consultation = 27134; MHTP = 2715, 2717, 2700, 2701; RV MHTP = 2712</li> <li>• RACH Ax: 701, 703, 705, 707</li> <li>• RMMMR = 903; care plan contribution = 731; prolonged critical condition attendance = 160-164</li> <li>• WIP: Nurses and aboriginal health workers can provide ACP support , follow up interventions under WIP funding.</li> </ul>
Peak Body Palliative Care Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">I am a Health Care Professional</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Discussion Starters</a></li> </ul>	
Referral - local palliative care services	Palliative Care Victoria <a href="#">service directory</a>	
Anticipatory medicines end-of-life care	<a href="#">A consensus-based list of medicines suitable for the management of terminal symptoms in community and residential aged care facilities in Australia</a>	
Other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find practical resources to help you plan and coordinate palliative care for people living in the community. <a href="#">General Practitioner - Health Professionals (caresearch.com.au)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Resources to support you (caringathomeproject.com.au)</a> Health professionals</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://centreforpallcare.org">The Centre for Palliative Care - CPCEducation Palliative Care Education (centreforpallcare.org)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">palliMEDS</a> app to familiarise primary care prescribers with eight palliative care medicines that have been endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM) for management of terminal symptoms.</li> <li>• <a href="#">caring@home app and caring@home Indigenous app</a> assists health professionals supporting families, carers and patients. Purpose-built apps to give easy and quick access to resources</li> <li>• <a href="#">Managing palliative care symptoms: A guide for health professionals</a> provides written and pictorial material that can be used as a guide for health professionals to assist them to support families who are caring for a person who chooses to die at home, if this is possible</li> <li>• <a href="#">Introducing caring@home resources PowerPoint</a> This presentation may be used when introducing the <i>caring@home</i> resources in your service</li> </ul>
<p><b>ELDAC (End of Life Directions for Aged Care)</b></p>	<p><a href="#">ELDAC toolkits</a> can help you in providing palliative care and advance care planning to older Australians. Toolkits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary care</li> <li>• Home care</li> <li>• Residential Aged Care</li> <li>• End of Life Law</li> <li>• Linkages</li> <li>• Dementia</li> <li>• Allied Health</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Residential Aged Care Home (RACH)</b></p>	<p>General Practitioners (GPs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://caresearch.com.au">caresearch.com.au</a></li> <li>• <b>palliAGEDgp app:</b> This smartphone app supports GPs who are caring for older palliative patients living at home or in residential care. It's available for free download from online app stores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Apple App Store</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Play Store for Android</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p>Nurses</p>	<p><b>palliAGEDnurse app:</b> This app helps nurses working in residential aged care, community care and general practice to care for older people with palliative care needs. It's available for free download from online app stores:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Apple App Store</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Play Store for Android</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>AOD Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders</b></p>	<p>It is not uncommon to refer to 'death and dying' as 'sorry business, sad business, finishing up, final days, final footsteps/final footprints, journey, pathway or going back home or to the dreaming.' Similarly, the term 'palliative care' is not easily translated in the many and diverse</p>	<p>Indigenous Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (IPEPA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Palliative Care Education Toolkit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professionals</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Print / PDF-writable workbook</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet - Palliative Care and End-of-Life CareCareSearch - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Care</a></li> </ul>

	languages spoken in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Discussion Starter – Working Out What's Right For You - Palliative Care Australia</a></li> </ul>
Paediatric palliative care	New 'Green Book' available for paediatric palliative care	<a href="#">A Practical Guide to Palliative Care in Paediatrics - Paediatric Palliative Care</a> 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.
	Victoria	The Victorian Paediatric Palliative Care Program (VPPCP) is a statewide program providing support to any family of a child or young person with a life-limiting illness who is treated in Victoria:  <a href="#">Kids Health Information: Palliative care - The Royal Children's Hospital</a>
	NSW	Please see <a href="#">NSW Paediatric Palliative Care</a> for further information.

### Information for patients/carers

Patient and Family support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Getting started guide: Advance Care Planning Australia</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">I am a Carer - Palliative Care Australia</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">New Carer Booklet Resource available - Palliative Care New South Wales (palliativecarenewsw.org.au)</a></li> </ul> <p>Resources for carers and families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Family / Carer Resources (caringathomeproject.com.au)</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Patient / Carer Information (quocca.com.au)</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Very Special Kids   VSK</a> Provides holistic palliative care for children and young people with life-limiting conditions, and tailored support for their families – through life, death and bereavement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Victorian Palliative Care Advice Service (PCAS)</b></p> <p>PCAS provides health service providers with direct access to a palliative medicine consultant to assist with symptom management, prescribing, medication conversions, and charting; offers practical advice to caregivers and community in addressing key aspects of care.</p> <p>Phone: 1800 360 000 (available 7am-10pm, every day of the year)</p> <p>Website: <a href="https://www.pcas.org.au/">https://www.pcas.org.au/</a></p>
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For further information or support please contact your local [Quality Improvement Consultant](#), email: [gpsupport@murrayphn.org.au](mailto:gpsupport@murrayphn.org.au) or visit the general practice support page on our [website](#).