

ADVANCE CARE PLAN INFORMATION SHEET

Advance care planning is a process for making and writing down future health care wishes in advance. It is important to know that medical treatment, including surgery, should only be given with your fully informed consent and that you have the right to refuse any treatment.

What you write down in your Advance Care Plan only comes into effect if and when you become unwell and are unable to make or communicate those wishes for yourself. If you become seriously ill, information in your Advance Care Plan will guide your family and doctor when making medical treatment decisions on your behalf. The Respecting Patient Choices Program staff can assist you with advance care planning.

Advance care planning can include:

1. Appointing a Medical Enduring Power of Attorney (MEPOA)

This is a legal document that allows you to appoint another person (your agent) to make medical treatment decisions on your behalf, but only if you are not able to make or communicate decisions for yourself. Your **MEPOA** is not authorised to make non-medical (e.g. financial) decisions for you. (A person who holds your Powers of Attorney, such as a General or a Financial Power of Attorney, is not authorised to make medical decisions).

When selecting someone to be your agent, it is important to choose someone 18 years or older, whom you trust, who knows you well, who is willing to respect your views and values, who will be a good advocate for you and who is able to make decisions under circumstances that may be difficult or stressful. Often a family member is a good choice as an agent, but not always. It is important that the person you select agrees to act as your agent and that you tell them your preferences regarding future medical treatment.

Please note: your agent cannot be a witness on your **MEPOA** form. One of the witnesses must be a person who can sign statutory declarations (e.g. doctor, dentist, pharmacist, a minister of religion, a lawyer or a justice of the peace).

2. Completing a Refusal of Treatment Certificate (RTC)

In Victoria, if you have a current medical condition, you may give legally binding directions about medical treatment that you do NOT want by completing a **RTC**. This document records your instructions for limiting the treatment of your current illness and doctors must comply with it when treating you. However, a **RTC** does not apply to new medical conditions that may arise later. A **RTC** enables you to refuse some or all current and future treatments for your current condition, except palliative care (relief of pain and suffering). If you become unable to make your own decisions and you have a MEPOA, then this person (your agent) may also complete a RTC on your behalf.

3. Writing down other wishes for future medical care

You may choose to record your wishes regarding future medical treatments on a **Statement of Choices**. This document also enables you to document your health care values. It is still most important to discuss your wishes with your agent (if appointed), family and doctor. Ideally your agent should witness your **Statement of Choices**. The **Statement of Choices** is designed to inform your agent, your family and your doctors of your wishes about your medical treatment in order to assist them in making decisions if you can no longer do so for yourself.

Changing or cancelling advance care planning document(s)

You might want to change or cancel your advance care planning document(s) in the future if there is a change in your personal or medical circumstances. For example, the person that you appointed may no longer be the best person for that role, or your goals for medical treatment may have changed. You can change or cancel these documents by drawing a line across the document, writing "void" on it and signing and dating it.

These documents can also be revoked by the completion of new document(s). The most recent dated document overrides the older document. To revoke a Refusal of Treatment Certificate, it is advisable to also fill in the cancellation section of the existing certificate. It is also important to inform your agent, family and your doctors of the changes and provide them with copies of your new documents.

Your Advance Care Plan may include any / all of the following:

- **Medical Enduring Power of Attorney**
- **Refusal of Treatment Certificate**
- **Statement of Choices**
- **A written document (signed and dated) outlining your treatment wishes and/ or your values.**

How to do advance care planning

1. Think about your beliefs, values and your goals for what is important in your life.
2. Talk to your family and friends about your wishes for health care in the future.
3. Talk to your GP, hospital doctor or other health professionals and find out more about your illness and what may occur in the future. Discuss with them your health care wishes.
4. If you wish, choose a person to be your agent, and discuss your beliefs, values, goals, and your wishes regarding medical treatment with them. Ensure that they understand your viewpoint.
5. Write down your choices / wishes in an Advance Care Plan.
6. You need your documents witnessed. **One of those witnesses needs to be your doctor.**
7. If possible, give copies of your documents to the relevant people (in case they need them in the future); this may include your agent, family or friends, your doctor or hospital.

Phone Respecting Patient Choices Program at Eastern Health on: 99551276

More information is also available from:

www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au

www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

or call the Office of the Public Advocate on 1800 677 402.

#Definition of family: Those closest to the person in knowledge, care and affection. This includes the immediate biological family; the family of acquisition (related by marriage/contract); and the family of choices and friends (not related biologically or by marriage/contract).