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PLAN AHEAD FOR END OF LIFE CARE
National Palliative Care Week 20-26 May 2018

All Australians should consider planning for their end of life care, so that their families and doctors know their wishes, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today.

Today is the start of National Palliative Care Week, which this year has the theme, “*What matters most?*”

“Australians need to plan ahead for their end of life care and discuss it with their loved ones and health professionals,” Dr Gannon said.

“Thinking about, and planning ahead for, your end of life care means you are more likely to receive the type of care and treatments that you actually want, rather than those you do not want.

“Discussing your end of life care plans with your family members helps them to better understand your values, preferences, and goals of care, and will assist them should they have to make decisions on your behalf if you cannot make or communicate your own decisions.

“Doctors, particularly general practitioners, play an important role in helping patients plan ahead through a process known as advance care planning.

“Advance care planning should become a part of routine clinical practice, and plans should be regularly revisited to ensure they continue to reflect a person's values and care preferences.

“The primary role of the doctor in actually providing end of life care is to facilitate the provision of good quality, patient-centred care that emphasises continuous, open, informed communication and collaboration between the patient, the health care team and, where appropriate, the patient's carers, family members and/or substitute decision-makers.

“For those facing a life-limiting illness, telling your doctor ‘what matters most’ assists the doctor in developing clinical care plans aimed at upholding your goals of care.

“Telling your family, or substitute decision-maker, ‘what matters most’ to you means they can make decisions consistent with your wishes should they have to make decisions on your behalf in the future.

“The other thing that matters is expanding palliative care services to patients who need it, especially in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas.

“A fear of death and dying underlies much of the community’s interest in euthanasia and physician assisted suicide. Even the most fervent advocates for a change to the law acknowledge that expanding palliative care services is desirable and necessary.”

National Palliative Care Week is supported by the Department of Health to raise awareness and understanding about palliative care in the Australian community.

For more information, visit <http://palliativecare.org.au/national-palliative-care-week>

The AMA's *Position Statement on End of Life Care and Advance Care Planning 2014*, is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/end-life-care-and-advance-care-planning-2014>

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