

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**MAKE ADVANCE CARE PLANNING YOUR RESOLUTION FOR 2018**

While losing weight, exercising more, and quitting smoking are the more usual New Year’s resolutions, the AMA is encouraging Australians to consider making 2018 the year they record an advance care plan.

“While death and dying may not seem like the most uplifting topic for the holidays, a gathering of family and friends is the perfect time to think about and discuss what care options you may want at the end of life,” AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today.

“Death, dying, and bereavement are an integral part of life, and advance care planning can make this difficult time easier for all concerned.

“Advance care planning is a process of stating health care preferences, including goals of care and preferred health outcomes, to help guide those who make decisions on your behalf should you lose decision-making capacity at the end of life.

“It is better to have such discussions during a relaxed family holiday gathering than in the intensive care unit, where you may not be in a position to even participate in decision-making, and others have to make health care decisions on your behalf in a very stressful situation.

“Advance care planning benefits not only the patient, but plays an important role in supporting family members or other substitute decision-makers to act in accordance with your wishes.

“Advance care plans help ensure family members are clear on your preferences, which can alleviate stress and reduce conflict between loved ones, who may not otherwise know what care you would want under the circumstances.

“The plans also support the healthcare team by informing the development of a clinical care plan, where doctors can set out specific treatment directions based on your healthcare preferences and goals of care.

“We strongly suggest that you discuss advance care planning with your GP, who can respond to clinical questions you might have, and that you record your advance care plan and ensure it is readily available and known to those who will make decisions on your behalf.

“There are different ways to record a plan, including an advance care directive, medical enduring power of attorney, a letter, an entry in your medical record, or even a verbal instruction.

“It is important to regularly review your plan to ensure it still meets your goals of care, which may change should you develop a life-limiting condition, and as that condition progresses.

“Make sure to alert your GP and substitute decision-makers to any changes in your plan.

“Advance care planning can be done by anyone at any age, regardless of whether you are healthy or experiencing an illness.

“Do yourself, and those around you, a favour and make advance care planning part of your New Year’s resolution for 2018.”

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

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