

No-Touch Wellbeing Session

GUIDE: ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

Presented by Margarete Helmuth

By Zoom Sunday 13th September 2020

I would like to speak to you about making an Advance Care Plan, and two related sources of information, one of them solidly based on British Columbian laws.

The old Roman proverb: "Death is certain, its hour is uncertain" is still valid today in spite of the advances in medicine, which have led to an average increase in life expectancy of 20 years over the last 100 years.

This truth has caused me to think about a modern approach to HOW I would like to see my inevitable death.

At the age of 83, I might one day soon very much need such a plan. However, it could certainly be of great help at any age, since health circumstances can change at any time.

In Victoria, there is an organization called "Choices in Dying Victoria". The co-chair, Margot Lods offers workshops on "Advance Care Planning", which are based on the BC Government, Ministry of Health publication entitled: "My Voice- Expressing my wishes for future Health Care Treatment".

<https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2020/MyVoice-AdvanceCarePlanningGuide.pdf>

I recently took part in Ms. Lods workshops and will give you a brief overview of my learnings.

The Advance Care Plan in "My Voice" consist of six sections:

Section 1 is about "Your Beliefs, Values, and Wishes".

This directs your representative and health care providers to make decisions in accordance with your beliefs, values and wishes if you are no longer able to understand the options or cannot communicate them. They are only your wishes, and no one is bound by law to follow these.

Section 2 is the "Advance Directive". *Here you instruct health care providers what medical treatments you will allow or refuse. They are bound by law to follow these directions.*

Section 3 is a "Representation Agreement". *This appoints a person of your choice and an alternate to make decisions about your health care in accordance with the beliefs, values and wishes that you outlined in Section 1.*

Section 4 gives your health care provider permission to assign a "Temporary Substitute Decision Maker" *if you do not have a representative. The order is set by law, usually starting with a spouse, then your children, and so on.*

Section 5 requires you to have a conversation with your Representative, and close family and/or friends. *This is absolutely necessary so that everyone in your inner circle is informed about your wishes.*

In Section 6 it is highly recommended having a consultation with your health care provider.

In the "My Voice" booklet, you will find these sections thoroughly explained, as well as the necessary forms that you can complete on your own.

Both the booklet and the workshop are well guided and very informative.

Since taking the workshop, I also learned of another means to make an Advance Care Plan. The "Planwell Guide" is available cost-free on the internet and was developed Dr. Darren Heyland (*Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario*). <https://planwellguide.com/>

The site provides explanations, instructions, and concepts about legal and medical matters. From there, you complete a quiz to test your knowledge. Then you move on to develop an advanced care plan.

A series of questions allow you to respond on a scale from 1 to 7 depending on your comfort zone and wishes with the related issue. Your responses are captured in the program, and in the end, all this information is summarized in a formal "Letter to the Doctor" that you can print and sign.

Planwell Guide also recommends that you have a "Representation Agreement", and that you discuss your plans with your representative, family, and friends, as well as with your health care provider. They should all receive a copy of the document.

It is also highly recommended that you put a copy of these documents in a sturdy envelop marked: "Important Health Care Information" and attach this to your fridge so that it can be easily found in case of an emergency.