



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

A facility of St Vincent's Health Australia

*best*CARE

Advance Care Planning at St Vincent's

Advance Care Planning: Catholic Considerations

Workshop for HARP & RIR: Advance Care Planning

Rev Kevin McGovern

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Key Messages

- Advance Care Planning is consistent with Catholic ethical standards.
- Supporting patients and their families through these choices, especially towards the end of life, is a key expression of our Mission and Values.
- Each patient will have his or her own views about the benefits and burdens of various treatment options. We demonstrate compassion:
 - by providing an environment which assists each person to recognise, consider and make informed decisions,
 - by keeping an effective record of these decisions, and
 - by helping patients to review these decisions as appropriate.
- In all this, what is most important is ongoing conversation. Paperwork records the ongoing conversation, but must never take over from it.

Catholic or Traditional Morality

- Each person has a moral responsibility to use those means of sustaining our lives that are effective, not overly burdensome and reasonably available ('ordinary' or 'proportionate' means).
- Each person has a moral right to refuse any treatment that is futile, overly burdensome or morally unacceptable ('extraordinary' or 'disproportionate' means).

Modern or Secular Morality

- Each competent person has an unlimited right to refuse all medical treatment.

*These two standards co-exist in health care,
sometimes in an uneasy tension.*

Catholic Standards

- Futile and/or
- overly burdensome treatment
 - physically too painful
 - psychologically too distressing
 - socially too isolating
 - financially too expensive
 - morally repugnant
 - spiritually too distressing
- may be refused.

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- Respect for persons requires that they are neither over-treated nor under-treated, but instead that they receive **appropriate** care: **bestCARE** for them!
 - Providing bestCARE requires us to **initiate** these sometimes difficult conversations.
 - Patients may not ask. Even so, they expect that we as health professionals will initiate these conversations.
 - Providing bestCARE also requires us to assist patients to **review** their decisions:
 - at regular intervals (e.g. every 6 or 12 months)
 - if a person's health situation changes significantly
 - e.g. their health deteriorates; they are admitted into hospital
 - if a person's social situation changes significantly
 - e.g. a significant goal has been achieved - they celebrate their 80th birthday, or attend a significant celebration

Conclusion

Our Care Planning in Advance is an important expression of our Mission and Values because:

It locates health care in the context of broader questions about living and invites patients to be active in their health choices.

It supports our staff as they assist patients and their families in periods of emotional distress.

It shows our commitment to listening to patients, understanding and respecting their values and engaging compassionately in difficult conversations.

It compels us to ensure that each person has access to bestCARE (the best treatment and appropriate care) at every stage of their illness.