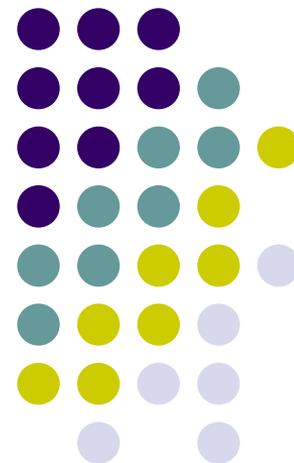


# Advance Care Planning: Catholic Teaching & Resources

Fr Kevin McGovern,  
Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics:  
In-Service for Sale Clergy,  
23 September 2015



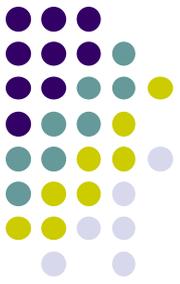
Caroline Chisholm  
Centre for Health Ethics

# Overview of the day



- 1) Advance Care Planning:  
Catholic Teaching & Resources
- 2) Dementia:  
A Challenge to the Church

# Overview of this presentation



1. Introduction
2. Catholic Teaching and Resources
3. Practical Considerations
4. Questions for Discussion



# 1. Introduction

- From C20, modern medicine has greatly increased average life expectancy
  - BUT
    - many more are old, frail and chronically ill
    - towards the end of life, medical treatment probably won't cure, but may make a final illness and death very unpleasant ('dysthanasia')
    - towards the end, many are unconscious/incompetent → at that time, cannot say no to further treatment

# 1. Introduction (cont'd)



‘Living Will’ or Advance Care Directive

→ Substitute Decision Maker

→ Substitute Decision Maker, along with Statement of Wishes and/or Advance Directive

# 1. Introduction: Catholic Teaching



- 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).

# 1. Introduction:

## Catholic Teaching (cont'd)



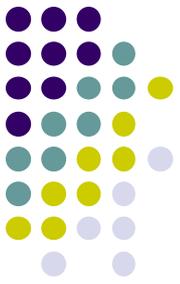
- Catholic Teaching therefore provides a basis for Advance Care Planning.
- Gerontologist Myles Sheehan SJ says that Advance Care Planning is just as much a pro-life issue as euthanasia and abortion: it is pro-life to seek to preserve people from unnecessary suffering at the end of life.

## 2. Catholic Teaching and Resources



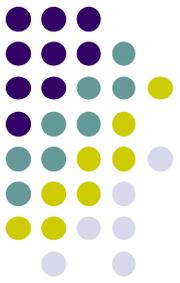
- *Advance Care Plan*
- *A Guide for People Considering Their Future Health Care*
- *A Guide for Health Care Professionals Implementing a Future Health Care Plan*
- *Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia*
  - Download them all for free from **Catholic Health Australia** website: <http://www.cha.org.au/publications.html>

# *A Guide for People Considering Their Future Health Care*



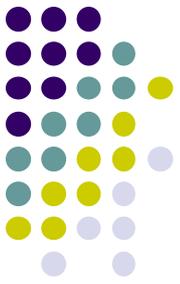
- The focus should be on ongoing communication (NOT just filling in forms!)
  - “Planning your future health care requires good communication between you and your family, friends and health care professional.”
  - Forms and other records should serve rather than replace the ongoing conversation.
  - Forms – including medical notes or an advance directive – can indeed be appropriate especially for those who have serious illnesses or those who are frail and elderly.

# *A Guide for People Considering Their Future Health Care (cont'd)*



- Recommends Substitute Decision Maker before Advance Directive
  - “A health representative can make decisions on your behalf.... These health decisions have the advantage of being flexible in response to changing circumstances.”
  - Victorian form: *Medical Enduring Power of Attorney*
    - <http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-services/publications-forms/enduring-powers-of-attorney/enduring-power-of-attorney-medical-treatment>

# ***A Guide for People Considering Their Future Health Care (cont'd)***



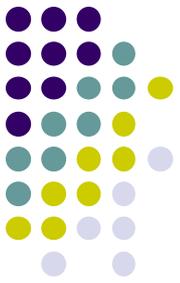
- Guiding Your Substitute Decision Maker
  - “A good future health care plan should... aim to provide them with clear guidance... which can be adapted according to changing circumstances.”
  - “You can allow your representative to make health decisions for you, or you can provide that person with specific advice, verbally or in writing, or by having it recorded in your doctor’s records.”
  - You can also use – and recommend – CHA’s *Advance Care Plan*.



# CHA *Advance Care Plan*

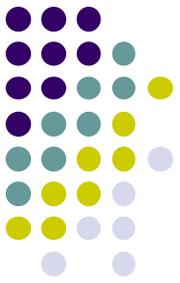
- an excellent document for most people, especially those who are in reasonably good health
  - appointing a representative (p. 1)
  - guiding my representative (p. 3)
- Catholic Health Australia Advance Care Planning website: <http://myfuturecare.org.au/>

# Priests and Advance Care Planning



- When a priest cannot speak for himself, it is not always clear who should speak for him.
- For this reason, it is most important that priests do document their wishes about substitute decision makers and treatment wishes.
- Certified copies of any forms should be lodged with the Vicar General of their diocese.

# Extraordinary or Disproportionate Means



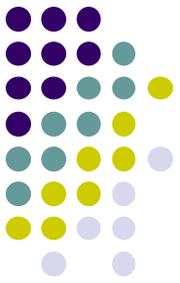
- Futile and/or
- Overly burdensome
  - physically too painful
  - psychologically too distressing
  - socially too isolating
  - financially too expensive
  - morally repugnant
  - spiritually too distressing
- ‘heroic’ or ‘cruel’ treatment
- may be refused

# Standards for Decision Making



- Best Interests  
= we decide for them
- Substituted Judgment  
= we speak for them (i.e. we seek to identify the decision that they would make)
  - USCCB's *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, #25: "Decisions by the designated surrogate should be faithful to Catholic moral principles and to the person's intentions and values, or if the person's intentions are unknown, to the person's best interests."

# Tube Feeding



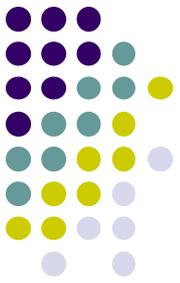
- John Paul II. “Address to Participants in the International Congress on ‘Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State.’” (20 March 2004).
- ACBC Bishops Committee for Health, Bishops Committee for Doctrine and Morals, and Catholic Health Australia. “Briefing Note on the Obligation to Provide Nutrition and Hydration.” (2004).
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. “Responses to Questions Concerning Artificial Nutrition and Hydration.” (1 August 2007).
- McGovern, Kevin. “Catholic Teaching about Tube Feeding.” *Chisholm Health Ethics Bulletin* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 8-12.
- McGovern, Kevin. “Tube Feeding, Catholic Teaching and Dementia.” *Health Matters* 64 (Summer 2012): 36-37.
  - Articles by KMcG at CCCHE, <http://www.chisholmhealthethics.org.au/publications>.

# Tube Feeding (cont'd)



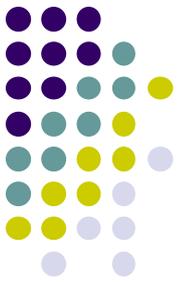
- Catholic teaching on tube feeding has considered a specific condition, Post-coma unresponsiveness (Vegetative state) (PCU)
- In PCU, tube feeding “should be considered, in principle, ordinary and proportionate, and as such morally obligatory.” (John Paul II)
- Tube feeding usually offers little if any benefit in advanced dementia.
- Decide on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, however, a feeding tube would not be inserted into a person with advanced dementia.

# 3. Practical Considerations



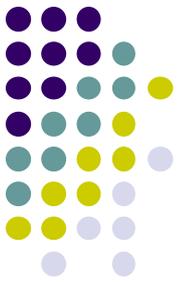
- Communication about End of Life Decisions:
  - If I am very sick and it could go either way, how hard do I want the health professionals to try to save my life?
  - If I have advanced dementia and I develop pneumonia, do I want treatment to try to cure the pneumonia?
  - If it is possible, do I want to be an organ and tissue donor?

# 3. Practical Considerations



- Other Matters
  - Have I made a will? Do I have special things that I want to leave to specific people? (Make a list!)
  - Any last messages for anyone?
  - As death nears, do you want:
    - people to be told you are sick and asked to pray for you?
    - people with you? Who?
    - to have people talk to you and hold your hand, even if you don't seem to respond?
  - Funeral wishes
    - e.g. readings, hymns, readers, pall bearers, etc.
  - Burial wishes
  - What else is important for you?

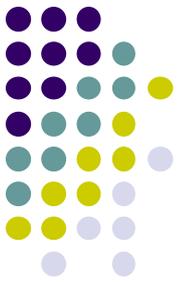
# 4. Questions for Discussion



- What experiences have I had of end-of-life decision-making and/or Advance Care Planning?
- What stood out to me as important in this presentation?
- What can I/we do to promote knowledge and understanding about Advance Care Planning and end-of-life decision-making in the diocese?
- What can I/we do to promote knowledge and understanding about the Catholic ethical standards for these and the *Catholic Advance Care Plan*?
- Are there people or places where we should particularly target this information?

# Crossing the Bar

by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)



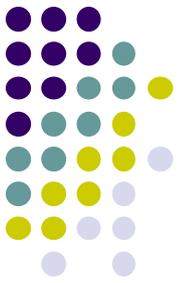
- Sunset and evening star,  
    And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
    When I put out to sea,
- But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
    Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
    Turns again home.
- Twilight and evening bell,  
    And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
    When I embark;
- For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place  
    The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
    When I have crost the bar.

# 4. Questions for Discussion



- What experiences have I had of end-of-life decision-making and/or Advance Care Planning?
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# Presenter



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