Triggers

Consider advance care planning in the following patient scenarios

- If the patient raises ACP with a member of the general practice team
- If the answer to “Would I be surprised if this patient died within the next 12 months?” is “No”
- Has an advanced chronic illness (e.g. COPD, heart failure)
- Has a life limiting illness (e.g. dementia or advanced cancer)
- Is aged 75 years or older, or 55 years or older if they are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
- Is a resident of, or is about to enter, an aged care facility
- Is at risk of losing competence (e.g. has early dementia)
- Has a new significant diagnosis (e.g. metastatic disease, transient ischemic attack)
- Is at a key point in their illness trajectory (e.g. recent or repeated hospitalisation, commenced on home oxygen)
- Does not have anyone (e.g. family, caregiver, friend) who could act as substitute decision maker
- May anticipate decision-making conflict about their future healthcare
- If the patient has a carer

Conversation starters

STEP 1: Introducing the topic
“I try to talk to all my patients about what they would want if they became more unwell. Have you ever thought about this?”

STEP 2: Who will speak for you
“Who would you like me to talk to if you were unable to talk to me about important medical treatment decisions?”

STEP 3: Broad topics – goals, values and beliefs
“What does it mean to you to ‘live well’? What are your goals at this time?”

STEP 4: Specific topics – care and treatments preferences
“What do you understand about where things stand right now with your illness?”

STEP 5: Concluding the conversation
“Thank you for clarifying your values and goals. Does your family (or caregivers or friends) know what you would want?”

Further Information

- Overview of advance care planning and link to Position Statement

Advance Care Planning Australia (ACPA) http://advancecareplanning.org.au/
- Extensive information including links to state legislation and forms

Decision Assist www.decisionassist.org.au
- Advisory line 1300 668 908. (For ACP Monday–Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm (AEST). For palliative care 24/7, 7 days per week)

The “Next Steps” training resources for doctors and other health professionals
- Scroll down to videos demonstrating advance care planning conversations.

AMA – Good medical practice: a code of conduct for doctors in Australia
- Section 3.12 End of life care