



Media Release

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Palliative Care Australia welcomes report on Burden of Disease Study

Palliative Care Australia's CEO Liz Callaghan today welcomed the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report on the *Australian Burden of Disease Study-impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011*.

Ms Callaghan said the findings highlighted the proportion of people living with chronic disease potentially missing out on palliative care support.

National Palliative Care Week (22-28 May) this year focusses on 'Living Well with Chronic Illness' and provides the perfect opportunity for friends and family to encourage people with life-limiting conditions to make their wishes known.

"Palliative Care Australia has long recognised the impact of chronic illness has which has now been underscored by this Burden of Disease Study," Ms Callaghan said.

"This report finds that most of the burden of disease in 2011 was from chronic diseases such as cancer (19% and mostly fatal), cardiovascular diseases (15%), mental and substance use disorders (12%) and musculoskeletal conditions (12%) and injuries (9%) - 66% of the total burden.

"Coronary heart disease, back pain and problems, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer, as the leading specific diseases, contributed 18% of the total burden," Ms Callaghan said.

Burden of disease analysis is a technique used to assess and compare the impact of different diseases, conditions or injuries and risk factors on a population.

"This is why we have made chronic illness the focus of this year's National Palliative Care Week. It is important for people with chronic disease and who have a fatal burden, to have the same access to palliative care services as people with malignant disease," Ms Callaghan said.

"Four out of five deaths in Australia are caused by chronic illness, but there is a misconception that only cancer patients can access palliative care. People with chronic illnesses often have more than one chronic illness which affects their health in different ways.

"Many don't realise that palliative care can help people with chronic illnesses to live well. Early access to palliative care can help them have a better quality of life," Ms Callaghan said.

More information on National Palliative Care Week is available at <http://palliativecare.org.au/national-palliative-care-week/>

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