



Media Release

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Identifying 'goals of care' will help Aussies die better

Moves to encourage Emergency Department doctors to establish 'goals of care' with patients and their families will mean more Australians have the chance to die where they choose, according to Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

Five peak specialty medical groups have each identified five tests and treatments that physicians and consumers should question as a part of the Choosing Wisely campaign. This includes looking at the type of care people receive at the end of life.

"The circumstances in which someone dies can have a significant impact on family and friends. One in two Australians die in acute hospital settings, while most wish to die at home, avoiding often painful interventions with little quality of life benefit.

"Watching someone die in distress, as can happen if wishes are not taken into consideration, can have long-term social and emotional impacts on family and friends.

"PCA supports a focus on patient centred care, particularly identifying the patient's wishes and working closely with the family to ensure a positive outcome for the patient," she said.

The Australian College of Emergency Medicine calls for 'appropriate' monitoring and investigations and encourages doctors to arrange for end-of-life patients to be admitted to a palliative care facility. This is the ideal scenario, but in order to achieve this requires further investment and recognition of the benefits of palliative care. Australia needs more palliative care facilities and services in order to meet this expected growing demand.

"Without doubt we support all physicians having conversations about end of life and palliative care with patients and families.

"In just under a month National Palliative Care Week will be telling all Australians they need to start talking about dying so all of us become advocates for palliative care for those closest to us. These are conversations doctors often struggle to have, they are trained to keep people alive after all. But they are very important and families look to them to help them through this challenging time.

"Often the breakdown of communication between doctors and families is what leads to inappropriate care, and sometimes distressing situations," Ms Callaghan said.

Media contact: PCA Frith Rayner 0400 45 99 88

