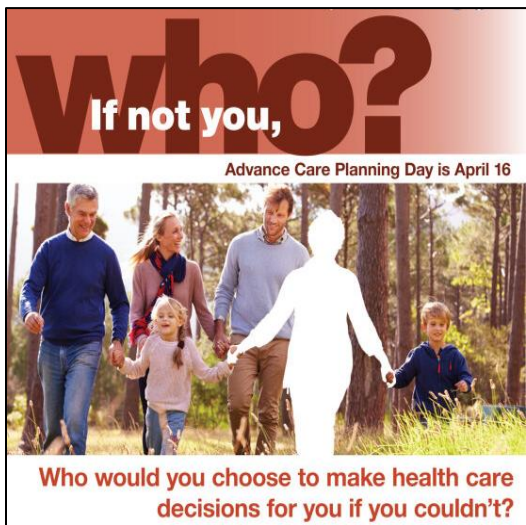


# Think. Talk. Plan.

Who would you choose to make health-care decisions for you if you could not?



Advance Care Planning is a process of reflection and communication. Making the time to think and talk about your values and wishes for your future health and personal care with the people who matter most to you may just be the best gifts you could give your loved ones. **With an advance care plan (ACP) in place, not only is your representative empowered to speak on your behalf, but it can help reduce the risk of any conflict between family members and health care providers.** More importantly, deciding the treatment and care you want now will help you avoid the ones you don't want.

Dr. Claire Talbot, B.Sc., M.D., CCFP-PC, is a palliative care physician in Vancouver, BC. She has seen what happens when ACP is not in place. When a crisis comes along, she has witnessed families struggle to make decisions about medical care. Dr. Talbot also brings a sensitivity and understanding of different backgrounds, cultures and personalities that can affect decision making.

"It can be challenging to watch a family member make decisions that may not be what an individual would have wanted," says Dr. Talbot. "When illnesses progress and quality of life declines, it can be difficult for family members to accept that the end is near and that further aggressive treatments will not help and may cause more distress. I have seen family members continue to wish for and ask for interventions which are no longer appropriate".

When an advance care plan has not been communicated, anxiety and stress may take over, as opposed to using reason and careful consideration. To have family members and loved ones be left in this position can create an emotional storm. A designated spokesperson needs to feel comfortable taking on this role and there must be a sense of trust that they will follow through as wishes are expressed.

Any adult in B.C. 19 years and older can appoint a Substitute Decision Maker or Representative to speak on their behalf should they become unable to speak for themselves. ACP is a gift you can give your family and loved ones. It lets them know the kind of care you want (or don't want) and helps your decision maker communicate more effectively with your health-care team. Sharing your values and wishes can also include sharing your culture and beliefs, what support or care options you may refuse to receive if that situation arises. Asking someone you trust to be your representative is both a privilege and a responsibility.

Documenting your wishes can be done in a personal letter, recorded on video or voice recorder, complete with any supporting documents related to your care. This may include a Representation agreement or an advance directive, depending on what is right for your needs.

---

Get started with [ACP Information Booklet](#). Visit [ACP Resource Hub](#) to find resources for Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, and English speakers.

