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AHS encourages Albertans to think about end-of-life care

Conversations matter when documenting your health care wishes

CALGARY – New online tools are now available to help Albertans think and talk about their wishes for end-of-life care.

[Conversations Matter](#), launched by Alberta Health Services (AHS) to coincide with National Advance Care Planning Day, provides information on advance care planning and an interactive online tool designed to help individuals determine their personal preferences in the event that they become incapable of consenting to or refusing treatment or other care.

“The fundamental principle behind advance care planning is the right to make informed decisions about your care today and for the future,” says Dr. Verna Yiu, AHS’ Vice President Quality & Chief Medical Officer.

The interactive online tool, soon to be available through the AHS mobile app, has been created to help Albertans understand advance care planning before they enter into the health care system.

“We know having these conversations and documenting your health care wishes can be difficult, but we know it is invaluable for families who have gone through this process. It brings comfort to families and helps ease the burden of making those tough decisions because they already know what their loved one’s wishes and values are,” says Dr. Yiu.

Calgary resident Deb Cook says knowing her mother’s end-of-life wishes were being fulfilled created a sense of peace and was “worth its weight in gold.”

“It made it so much easier on all of us because we were doing what she wanted us to do,” says Cook, whose mother developed Alzheimer’s disease in 2008 and died three years later.

“One evening, soon after the diagnosis, our family sat together with mom and walked through her wishes. In the end, it took the stress off of everybody. Her end of life was a celebration.”

Cook says she was able to cherish the last days of her mother’s life rather than be consumed by guilt and stress wondering if she was making the right health care decisions on behalf of her mother.

“There is a stigma around talking about end-of-life care,” says Dr. Yiu, “but, for many individuals who have gone through this process, they are grateful to have had the chance to discuss and understand their situation.”

Physicians, patients, and families interested in learning more about advance care planning are encouraged to visit www.conversationsmatter.ca.

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Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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