Medical assistance in dying: the manager’s role in supporting staff

Managers are critical partners

Given changes in federal law, medical assistance in dying is now a care option for eligible patients in Canada. Managers in health care play a critical role in supporting staff supporting patients in exploring their requests.

Requests may arise in any care setting; preparing your staff and providing access to resources will help them be ready. Flexibility within your care team and program is critical to sensitively address a request for medical assistance in dying.

Process overview

A patient seeking information about medical assistance in dying may seek to proceed with a formal request.

Once a formal request has been documented, the patient is assessed for eligibility by two Assessors (Physician and/or Nurse Practitioner).

Patients who are eligible and proceed with their request will then plan for a time and place to receive medications to bring about medical assistance in dying.

The Prescriber (the physician or nurse practitioner who performed one assessment and will be administering the medication) will pronounce the patient’s death and submit documents to the Coroner and the health authority.

Care of the patient and family before and after the procedure is as usual practice.

Stages in a request for medical assistance in dying may be characterized by the following:

- **Pre-contemplation** – patient is considering their care options, one of which might be medical assistance in dying
- **Contemplation** – patient is considering medical assistance in dying and requesting specific information about the process, possibly documenting a formal request
- **Determination** – following a documented request, assessments are performed to determine eligibility
- **Action** – if eligible, the patient and the Prescriber (with some connection with the care team) will collaborate in planning for and provision of medical assistance in dying
- **After Care** – care for the deceased and the family after medical assistance and dying has taken place.

How might your staff be involved?

Medical assistance in dying can take place in any location, ie. home or any clinical setting. To minimize disruption for the patient, at VCH a request is addressed in the location of the request*. A patient’s usual care transition from one care setting to another should not be disrupted just because a request is made; each patient’s situation will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Your staff may be involved in:

- Providing **information** for patients regarding medical assistance in dying
- Providing (and / or receiving) the **form** to document a patient’s formal request

*Note: Request is addressed at the location of the request only if it is feasible for patient and feasible for care team.

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*Note: Request is addressed at the location of the request only if it is feasible for patient and feasible for care team.
- Providing assistance during the planning for provision, or assistance during the provision itself.
- Providing usual care for the patient and family throughout the process.
  
  * A patient making a request while receiving care in a faith-based agency may need to be moved to a VCH setting if the agency has decided that the provision (and possibly assessments) may not take place there.

**Supporting teams**

- Preparation is critical; consider the likelihood your team might receive a request, and plan education and supports for them
- Assess your team’s educational needs and discuss with the Assisted Dying Program
- Review educational offerings on the VCH websites (internet and intranet); contact Assisted Dying Program for in-service sessions
- Ensure that staff are encouraged to review concerns of the patient and make the patients aware of all services and supports available to address their situation, mindful to not convey an impression that they are being judgemental or impeding the request for information.
- Respect staff who may be conscientious objectors and elect to not participate directly in assessments, preparation of the medication, or provision.

**VCH Assisted Dying Program**

- Care Coordination Service: supports staff in addressing patient’s request for information including coordination of information, documents, assessments, or other supports and resources and
- Education support: general and in the moment; call or email to discuss
- Provider development: support for Assessors, Prescribers, and Support Nurses
- System development: support for implementation in dying at VCH

**Links to additional resources**

Medical Assistance in Dying - [Brochure](#)
Medical Assistance in Dying - [Factsheet](#) (same content; formatted for direct printing)
Medical Assistance in Dying - [Factsheet (Chinese)](#)
Patient Health Education Materials Resource Catalogue (to order brochures)
Medical Assistance in Dying Patient Request Record
Medical assistance in dying VCH policy
VCH connect - Medical assistance in dying (intranet)
VCH Medical Staff resource page – Medical assistance in dying (internet)
Ministry of Health - Medical assistance in dying - Information for health-care providers
Ministry of Health - Medical Assistance in Dying – information for the public

**More Information**

Please contact the VCH Assisted Dying Program

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<tr>
<th>Patients</th>
<th>Health Care Providers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call</strong></td>
<td>1-844-550-5556</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cell: 604-613-5885</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Email</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:assisteddying@vch.ca">assisteddying@vch.ca</a></td>
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**Visit**

VCH Assisted Dying internet resource page
VCH connect - Medical assistance in dying (intranet)
VCH Medical Staff resource page – Medical assistance in dying (internet)