



Palliative and End-of-Life Care (PEOLC) and COVID-19

With COVID-19 and the impact on Palliative and End-of-Life Care (PEOLC) across Alberta, the Provincial Palliative and End-of-Life Care team is shortening the April newsletter and focusing it on items specific to PEOLC and COVID-19.

These are unprecedented and challenging times. The spread of COVID-19 is impacting health care providers professionally and personally. Most of the Provincial Palliative and End-of-Life Care work not directly relating to COVID-19 has been put on hold. Many of you are directly caring for patients and families that may be infected with COVID-19 and many have been redeployed to Health Link, assessment centers and other frontline service areas to support the response to COVID-19 in Alberta. Still others are working from home and/or self-isolating in line with public health requirements. Everyone is facing stress, uncertainty and increased workload while trying to adapt to a new lifestyle and support patients and families during this difficult time.

The Provincial Palliative and End-of-Life Care team is striving to support you by pulling together important information and links re: PEOLC and COVID-19 within this issue, including:

- The importance of Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care Designations during the pandemic as well as associated resources (page 2)
- PEOLC education in light of COVID-19 (page 3)
- Additional helpful links re: PEOLC and COVID-19 (page 5)

For more information:

- Please visit the Continuing Care Connection (connection.ahs.ca)
- The Provincial PEOLC team has developed a PEOLC COVID-19 SharePoint site. If you would like to access this site, please email palliative.care@ahs.ca.
- Please visit Insite and search for COVID-19 for additional resources and information for AHS and Covenant Health healthcare providers.



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Thank you from the Provincial PEOLC team and the Provincial Palliative End-of-Life Care Innovations Steering Committee (PPAL/EOLC ISC) to frontline clinicians and staff for caring for PEOLC patients and their families during this critical time. Thank you to those of you supporting PEOLC in other ways during this time such as providing direction, revising guidelines and creating documents to support patients, families and frontline healthcare providers. Please take care of yourselves and your families in these unpredictable times and know that your work is needed and very much appreciated.

Advance Care Planning / Goals of Care Designation (ACP/GCD) & COVID-19

April 16th is Advance Care Planning Day and it is more important than ever in these uncertain times.

In the months ahead, thousands of Albertans face the possibility of becoming suddenly and seriously unwell. All Albertans need to prepare for a scenario where they may be unable to make their own medical decisions, especially if they are older or have chronic or serious illness.

Research tells us that too many families find themselves in the devastating situation of making decisions blindly, without knowing or discussing their loved ones preferences. Although advance care planning conversations can be very challenging, particularly in light of the anxiety around COVID-19, being prepared for possible future events gives patients and families peace-of-mind.

As appropriate, please share the following online resources with your patients:

- [AHS Advance Care Planning](#)
- [Conversations Matter Guidebook](#) – this resource outlines the steps in advance care planning and explains Goals of Care Designations in plain language
- It can be as simple as reminding patients to choose and legally appoint a person they trust to make their medical decisions. Encourage them to download and complete a [Personal Directive form](#) for if and when they cannot make decisions for themselves.
- [Personal Directive](#)
A personal directive provides instruction for future medical care and identifies an agent to make personal decisions if needed.
- [Office of the Public Guardian](#)
The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) supports people who need help to make, or who aren't able to make personal decisions for themselves (that aren't financial).
- [Enduring Powers of Attorney](#)
Learn about this legal document you can use to appoint someone to make financial and legal decisions on your behalf.

Any questions please contact conversationsmatter@ahs.ca

[Plan Well Guide](#)

To prepare for Goals of Care Designation conversations with your family and family doctor, use this Alberta based online tool to clarify your values and increase your understanding of the difference between resuscitative care, medical care, and comfort care.

To learn more about the risks, benefits and possible outcomes of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and help you decide if its right for you, watch [CPR Decision Aid](#) (video).

- [Speak Up](#)

This website helps all Canadians think about and talk about the kind of health and personal care they would want in the future if they were unable to speak for themselves. It means having discussions with family and friends, especially your Substitute Decision Maker – the person who will speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself. It may also include writing down your wishes, and talking with healthcare providers and financial or legal professionals.

Checklist for EVERYONE (public, patients and healthcare providers) to consider:

- I have thought about my values and wishes and healthcare goals.
- I have thought about organ and tissue donation and I have communicated my wishes to my family and registered my donation intent on Alberta's Organ and Tissue Donation Registry.
- I have asked my healthcare provider(s) about my current health and what future healthcare decisions I might need to make.
- I have completed a personal directive and named my decision-maker (agent).
- I have spoken to my decision-maker (agent) about my wishes and given him or her a copy of my personal directive.
- I have discussed my healthcare treatment wishes with those closest to me.
- If medically appropriate my doctors and I have discussed the Goals of Care Designation that best reflects my current situation.
- If medically appropriate I have a Green Sleeve to hold my documents (including my personal directive and Goals of Care Designation Order) and I have placed it on or near my fridge.
- Whenever I go to the hospital or a healthcare appointment, I will bring my Green Sleeve with me.



Advance Care Planning—Spotlight Story

The Family Doctors in the Banff Primary Care Network are using the additional time resulting from social distancing due to COVID-19 to call all of their patients to engage in Goals of Care Designation (GCD) conversations. We are thrilled to hear of this goal and of the innovative use of their time to have these important conversations with their patients.

We encourage other healthcare providers to reach out to their patients to have advance care planning and GCD conversations. Please use the most up to date information and links below:

1. Having a current Personal Directive (PD) is the most important thing for all adult Albertans. This helps the health care team know who can legally represent the patient's wishes if they are unable to speak for themselves. [Here](#) is a link to the PD page on the AB government website. If a doctor discovers his/her patient does not have a PD, it is easy for patients to download/ print the form and complete it. If it is dated, signed and witnessed, no lawyer is needed to complete a PD.
2. [Here](#) is link to the **new** Conversations Matter guidebook that on page 8-11 explains in plain language the 7 GCDs and the differences between them.
3. [Here](#) is a good public facing webpage that explains the Green Sleeve "system." Check out this [video](#) as well.

Please contact conversationsmatter@ahs.ca with questions and/or for further discussion on how to integrate advance care planning and Goals of Care Designations into your practice.

Calgary Zone—Virtual Group and Individual Coaching for HealthCare Providers

The Calgary Zone can offer virtual group and individual coaching for healthcare providers wanting to brush up their GCD skills or with questions about Personal Directive use, etc. This is aimed at Calgary Zone healthcare providers but they'll do their best to redirect to other zones' teams or help where they can.

The flyer is titled "Covid 19: How Do I Talk About Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care? Help is Available!". It features the Alberta Health Services logo and a graphic of a book. The text states: "The Covid 19 pandemic has increased the importance and urgency of having Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care conversations with patients. The Calgary Zone Advance Care Planning Goals of Care Team are able to support Calgary Zone Health Care workers and are offering:" followed by a bulleted list: "Coaching around Advance Care Planning (ACP) conversations in the context of Covid 19.", "Coaching around Goals of Care conversations in the context of Covid 19.", "Personal Directive facilitation", "GCD information", "ACPGCD documentation and the Green Sleeve – where to look for the answers you may need about your patient's wishes/reliefs for medical care.", and "Tailored resources and scripted language you can use in your practice." Below this, it says "Please note: We are unable to provide medical advice specific to patients." A "Contact Us:" box contains the email CalgaryConversations.Matter@ahs.ca and phone numbers for Alexandra Kushliak (587-581-6448) and Jennifer Zelmer (587-284-4009). At the bottom, it says "We will respond to you as quickly as we can."

Reporting COVID-19 related Deaths

COVID-19 is not a notifiable cause of death that needs to be reported to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) (email communication from the OCME, March 30, 2020). If a patient has been treated for potential COVID-19 associated disease and the cause of death is consistent with COVID-19, the OCME does not require notification. The OCME only needs to know about COVID-related deaths that fit within their purview under the Fatality Inquiries Act (i.e. homicide, suicide, accident, unexplained, MAID, etc.). See the Fatality Inquiries Act Section 10(2) for a full listing of deaths that require notification to the OCME (<http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/F09.pdf>).

In light of the current Covid-19 situation, the (WHPCA) is hosting a series of weekly webinars about serious illness and palliative care community during the Covid-19 pandemic. Around the world people with palliative care needs and those caring for them are living through or preparing for covid-19. As a community, we are all coping with different levels of resources and are in different places in the journey. The WHPCA has created this virtual space where you can join, chat, ask questions, share or just listen in an open virtual space in these unprecedented times.

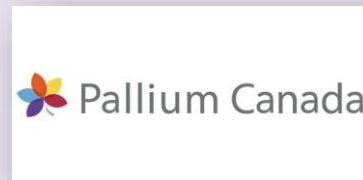
Following the success of their [first webinar](#) held on March 20th, ICPCN is partnering with WHPCA, IAHP and Palliative Care Voices to bring weekly webinars to the palliative care community. The webinars are open to all those who live with palliative care needs, palliative care health professionals and careers worldwide. For more information visit their [website](#).

Pallium Canada

Pallium, in collaboration with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), is providing free access to essential education on palliative care for all health care professionals in response to this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Pallium believes it is more important than ever for frontline health care professionals and teams to be equipped with the knowledge, tools, and skills to provide a palliative care approach to patients and their families.

For the next 3 months, Pallium is making 6 Learning Essential Approaches to Palliative Care (LEAP) modules available for free to all health care professionals. In doing so, they hope to contribute much needed education resources to the dedicated health care teams across Canada and ensure patients with life-limiting illnesses, and their families, receive the care they need. These modules are self-directed and completed online at the learner's own pace. More information on the modules and how to access them can be found here: <https://www.pallium.ca/course/covid-19-response-free-online-modules/>.

Pallium would greatly appreciate support in spreading the word about the availability of these free, online modules to all health care professionals, whether it is via your website, newsletter, social media, or another channel. If you can help, please have a member of your team connect with Robyn (rlevy@pallium.ca) where she can provide more information, including key messages.



Education Bulletin—Update

The Provincial Palliative and End-of-Life Care team will not be publishing a Provincial PEOLC Education Bulletin for this quarter. Unfortunately, with the directive for social distancing as well as the need for AHS to focus on the COVID-19 response, most education sessions, including those related to PEOLC, have been postponed or cancelled. This includes all in person courses offered via MyLearningLink for AHS staff across the province.

Calgary Zone Advance Care Planning/Goals of Care Designation, Grief Support and PEOLC in person education sessions, including the Mary O'Connor Conference, have also been cancelled at this time. Please contact your zone PEOLC operational leaders with questions and stay tuned to our next newsletter for further PEOLC education updates.

Additional Links

General information on COVID-19

- Canadian Medical Association COVID-19 information <https://www.cma.ca/cma-update-coronavirus>
- Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) AHS external page <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>
- Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) AHS external page for Albertans <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx>
- Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) AHS external page for Health Care Providers <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16947.aspx>
- Non-AHS and non-Covenant health care providers can access COVID-19 related resources on the Continuing Care Connection connection.ahs.ca

PEOLC and COVID-19

- CHPCA statement on COVID-19 <https://www.chpca.ca/news/chpca-statement-on-covid-19%e2%80%8b/>
- Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) Staff and Physician Resources - please visit Insite and search for COVID-19 . This includes COVID-19 resources including but not limited to PEOLC and ACP GCD specific resources

- The Provincial PEOLC team has developed a PEOLC COVID-19 SharePoint site. If you would like to access this site, please email palliative.care@ahs.ca.

ACP GCD and COVID-19

- [Planning Ahead with Vulnerable Patients During COVID-19: A Conversation Tool for Clinicians](#) (AHS COVID adapted SICG~pdf) Intended use: Continuing Care, Home Care, Ambulatory Care, Family practice a "scripted guide" to plan with vulnerable adults ahead of COVID infection
- [Streamlined Goals of Care Designation decision-making for COVID-19](#) Intended use: Emergency room, in-patients and other locations when GCD determination must be made rapidly.
- [COVID-ready communication skills: A playbook of VitalTalk Tips](#) Intended use: All healthcare providers to prepare and help feel more comfortable with communication under stressful times.
- Patient/public facing preparation resource: http://amytanmd.ucalgaryblogs.ca/files/2020/04/Guide-for-Talking-about-Wishes-Goals-with-COVID-19-Handout-by-Dr.-Amy-Tan-April-3_20-v2.pdf

Contacts

General questions or comments email: palliative.care@ahs.ca



Dr. James Silvius,
Provincial Medical Director, Seniors Health, Community, Seniors and Addiction & Mental Health Senior Medical Director, Seniors Health SCN



Barbara O'Neill,
Senior Provincial Director, Cancer SCN



Michelle Peterson Fraser,
Director; Palliative & End-of-Life Care; Seniors Health, Community, Seniors and Addiction & Mental Health



Tracy Lynn Wityk Martin,
Lead; Palliative & End of Life Care; Community, Seniors, Addiction & Mental Health



Aurora Leang,
Lead; Palliative & End-of-Life Care; Seniors Health, Community, Seniors and Addiction & Mental Health



Samantha MacGregor,
Administrative Assistant; Palliative & End-of-Life Care; Seniors Health, Community, Seniors and Addiction & Mental Health

