



## Making Your Wishes Known With an Advanced Care Plan

by Josie Padro



Some discussions are difficult to broach. Especially difficult are those concerning illness and end of life. Though it may be easier to avoid these topics while we're healthy, we may not be able to make our wishes known when we're ill.

In a recent education session on advance care planning here at NSCR, researcher and seniors' advocate Jane Osborne stated that 50 percent of us will not be able to make our own decisions in the final few days of our lives. Family members who are not prepared or are unsure of our wishes may, with the best intentions, choose treatments for us that we would not want.

To help BC residents work through these issues, the Ministry of Health has published an advance care planning guide called *My Voice*, which was adapted from an earlier workbook developed by the Fraser Health Authority.

*My Voice* outlines the different advance care planning options and the situations in which they can be applied. Especially helpful is the use of real life examples that illustrate how some families have made their plans.

The workbook includes check lists and legal forms that help you explore your thoughts and put your wishes into writing.

You can find *My Voice* Advance Care Planning guide on the BC Ministry of Health website [www.health.gov.bc.ca](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca) . Because of high demand, it is not presently available in hard copy, however North Shore Community Resources will print a copy for you to take home. Print copies also can be borrowed from most North Shore Libraries

As a result of new incapacity planning legislation passed in September 2011, BC residents have more ways to ensure they receive care according to their directions:

A **Representation Agreement** is a legal document that names the person, your representative, who will make your medical decisions if you are not able. It outlines your wishes regarding the type of medical treatments you do and do not want.

An **Advance Directive** is also a legal document for your health provider outlining your wishes for medical care. Health care professionals are legally bound to follow the instructions in the directive.

An **Advance Care Plan** provides family and friends with a statement of your wishes regarding medical care.

If you choose to draw up these documents, provide your family members and physician with copies. Not only do they ensure that your wishes are carried out when you cannot speak for yourself, but they also provide clear direction for your family members—direction that can be invaluable during a time that can already be extremely stressful for them.

Whether or not you draw up legal documents, it's important to complete the three key tasks of advance care planning:

- Have a discussion with those who are closest to you about how you would like to be cared for.
- Write down your wishes about how you want to be cared for.
- Record the names of those who you choose to speak for you if you can't speak for yourself.

**Nidus Personal Planning Resource Centre and Registry**, [www.nidus.ca](http://www.nidus.ca), is a nonprofit organization dedicated to personal planning issues. They provide self-help resources to assist with representation agreements, advance care directives and a number of other documents.

You can submit your representation agreement, advanced care plan or other documents to the Nidus Registry with information on where the originals are stored and who may access

them—whether it’s family members or medical institutions. You may also submit information such as the financial institutions you deal with, the name of your pharmacist, lawyer and physician. The cost of a Registry Account with Nidus is \$25 for your first document, and \$10 for each additional one. It’s a handy way to keep all your documents in one place so that you can review them regularly. It also provides convenient access for family and health professionals, if needed.

The **BC Ministry of Health**, [www.health.gov.bc.ca/hcc/advance-care-planning](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/hcc/advance-care-planning), is an excellent source of information on advance planning. Along with a link to *My Voice*, the site contains a list of “Frequently Asked Questions” on advanced care planning and to organizations and health authorities.

The **Fraser Health Authority** has been a leader in advanced care planning and has helpful information on its website, [www.fraserhealth](http://www.fraserhealth). Phone: 1-877-935.5669 or 604-587-4600

The **Public Guardian and Trustee of BC**, [www.trustee.bc.ca](http://www.trustee.bc.ca) also has a number of advance care planning publications on their website. Phone: 604-660-4444.