

Quick guide to introducing Advance Care Planning in routine consultations or health assessments

“As part of the annual check up we ask everyone about their future health wishes. Are you OK to talk with me about this for 5 to 10 minutes?” OR

“In the next 5 to 10 minutes, could I ask a few questions about your future health wishes?”

Consider adding: “This will help me to work out the best ways to help you with your future care.”

Purpose of the question	Suggested questions to ask the patient	Prompts for the clinician
Determine the patient's preferred substitute decision maker	Have you ever thought about who you would like to make medical decisions for you in an emergency if you were too unwell to speak for yourself? If so, who?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Record persons' preferred substitute decision maker in practice record
Determine if the patient has a legally appointed substitute decision maker	Have you ever signed a legal document to appoint someone to make health decisions on your behalf if you were unable to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If so, request copy for practice recordIf not, provide information about how to do this, especially if the patient's preferred substitute decision maker is someone who might not automatically be consulted according to the hierarchy in your state.
Determine the patient's previous involvement in Advance Care Planning	Have you talked <i>to anyone in your family or a close friend</i> about your wishes, values and beliefs about medical treatment and care in case you become seriously ill or unable to make your own decisions? <ul style="list-style-type: none">Have you spoken to a doctor or other health professional about this?Have you ever written down your wishes?	If written down: <ul style="list-style-type: none">In what type of document?When was it last reviewed?Is a copy available in practice record or my health record?
Determine the patient's understanding of Advance Care Planning and whether they wish to know more	Have you heard of Advance Care Planning or Advance Care Directives? Would you like to know more?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explain what ACP is (see definition overleaf)Provide information brochure about ACP in your state if appropriate
Determine the patient's readiness to discuss Advance Care Planning	Would you be comfortable if I (<i>or another member of the practice</i>) were to further discuss Advance Care Planning with you?	If so: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Find out which clinician they'd like to discuss it withSuggest they consider bringing their preferred substitute decision maker with them to the consultation
Explore the patient's wishes or priorities for future care.	Is there anything else you would like me (<i>or your health care team or the practice</i>) to know about your wishes or priorities when it comes to your future health care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Summarise key points and reflect back to patient to make sure you have understoodWrite summary in practice record

Next steps:

- Arrange further follow up to discuss ACP as appropriate
- Consider giving the patient the “Preparing for an advance care planning conversation” guide to take home and discuss with their family prior to the follow up appointment
- Consider providing information about formally appointing a substitute decision maker relevant to your state or territory.

Definitions and further information

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is a process that helps you to plan for future medical and personal care. It includes thinking about your values and clarifying your preferences for care if you became critically ill or injured. It is a way to make sure that people involved in your life understand your wishes about medical treatment and care. You may choose to write down an Advance Care Directive that records your specific wishes in the event of serious illness, and any treatments you would refuse.

For further information about advance care planning, substitute decision making legislation and the formal appointment of substitute decision maker (terminology varies throughout Australia) in your state please refer to:

Advance Care Planning Australia

<http://advancecareplanning.org.au>

RACGP Advance Care Planning

<https://www.racgp.org.au/running-a-practice/practice-resources/practice-tools/advance-care-planning>