Respecting Patient Choices Project at Northern Health

Northern Health will commence the rollout of its Respecting Patient Choices Project from September 2004. The Project rollout will be initiated in five medical areas (including the Ian Brand Nursing Home) across two of its four campuses: the acute setting of The Northern Hospital (TNH) and the sub-acute setting of the Bundoora Extended Care Centre (BECC).

The Northern Health Respecting Patient Choices Project is designed to link community-based health professionals with both the acute and sub-acute settings to facilitate smooth communication between all those whose patients have an advance care plan (ACP). The culturally and linguistically diverse community in the Northern Health catchment adds another layer of complexity to the Project, necessitating a carefully detailed rollout with community input.

The set up phase of the Project is almost complete and the initial Respecting Patient Choices Consultant Training workshops are planned for September and October in 2004. A launch of the Respecting Patient Choices project is scheduled to coincide with the first training of Respecting Patient Choices Consultants, on Monday 13th September at 2pm at The Northern Hospital.

Over 50 health care professionals from Northern Health have expressed interest in training, including medical, nursing, social work staff and pastoral care staff.

So far, over 400 Northern Health staff, health consumers and community health professionals have attended education sessions about the Respecting Patient Choices Project.

The Project is providing further education about ACP to other relevant areas of TNH and BECC with a view to ensuring that advance care planning becomes a sustainable, quality patient care initiative that complements the delivery of health care services by Northern Health.
Respecting Patient Choices Program at Eastern Health

Eastern Health is taking a multi-faceted approach to introducing the Respecting Patient Choices program. Within the acute setting of Box Hill Hospital, the main focus is on three general medical wards which also cover respiratory, stroke and cardiology patients. However, staff in the Emergency Department, Short Stay Unit and Transit Lounges have also been educated about advance care planning in order to start the process and flag patients for further follow-up in the wards or community specialist. Cardiac Failure and Urology nurses who see patients both in the wards and at home, as well as aged care managers from a number of community-based organizations have been trained as Respecting Patient Choices Consultants to allow for the introduction of advance care planning along the continuum of a patient’s journey.

A good example of the benefits of this approach is Mrs T who, while a patient in Box Hill Hospital was introduced to the program by the social worker/Respecting Patient Choices Consultant. On her discharge, Mrs T was referred to the Healthy at Home Program for follow-up of her health issues, but who also had staff trained as Respecting Patient Choices Consultants. The Healthy at Home Care Manager/Respecting Patient Choices Consultant was then able to assist Mrs T and her family to complete an Advance Care Plan (ACP) over a few visits. On completion, a copy of the ACP was forwarded to the Respecting Patient Choices Office for inclusion on her hospital file and an Alert placed on the Patient data base, completing the loop. Mrs T’s husband and family were thus also introduced to the program and Mrs T complied her own Advance Care Plan.

Given that approximately 25% of patients with four or more admissions to hospital come in from aged residential care, such facilities are an important area to be offered the program. Currently, Eastern Health is providing training and support to two residential care facilities, Milford and Strathdon. Residents have responded very positively and especially appreciate discussing these issues with staff whom they know so well.

Advance care planning education is offered on a continual basis to doctors within Box Hill Hospital, with GP education anticipated to rollout over the next six months. General education has also been provided to key staff at the other Eastern Health hospitals (Maroondah and Angliss) to enable recognition of any Advance Care Plans of patients who may attend there as well as Box Hill.

Resources permitting, the intent is to expand the program within Box Hill Hospital and other community-based organizations, with a focus on Peter James Centre, the Eastern Health sub-acute facility next.

New Sub-committee Established

The Respecting Patient Choices Program has established an Ethico-Legal Sub-Committee of the National Reference Group. The committee comprises a number of lawyers and ethicists from Victoria and currently the Victorian and South Australian Public Advocates are represented. As the Respecting Patient Choices Program expands to the various states/territories in Australia membership will expand to include the relevant Public Advocates or other relevant representatives from each state/territory.

The committee has been established to provide ethical and legal guidance to the Respecting Patient Choices Program to the National Reference Group of the Program.

Two meetings have been held in June and the next meeting is scheduled for August 2004. The committee have reviewed the Advance Care Plan for competent persons and will be providing legal and ethical guidance on the development of an Advance Care Plan for people who do not have the legal capacity to make medical decisions.

North East Valley Division GP Education Session

The North East Valley Division of General Practice joined with the Respecting Patient Choices Program at Austin Health, to encourage GPs to participate in a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity in June. The aim of the session was to introduce the Respecting Patient Choices Program to GPs.

This education session attempted to achieve four main outcomes. First, was the need to inform GPs about the Respecting Patient Choices Team and its program of advanced care planning. Second, to present the medical—legal implications of advance care planning using the Respecting Patient Choices Program model, process and documentation. Third, was to define the role of the GP in relation to the community extension of the Respecting Patient Choices Program and also for GPs that do not have residents in the Community Extension Residential Aged Care Facilities, and four, to illustrate the likely scenarios where RPC would apply via a number of case studies.

Written evaluations indicated that the session was of a particularly high standard and that it was very well received. The session is one part with the well-received CPDs offered in recent times by virtue of the very good feedback received. There was significant alignment between participants’ written answers to key learning questions and key learning objectives delineated when planning the session.

GP Information Kit

The GP Working Group has compiled the GP information Kit for GPs involved in the Community extension of the Respecting Patient Choices Program at Austin Health. This kit has been sent to all GPs that have patients in the Residential Aged Care Facilities participating in the community extension of the Respecting Patient Choices Program. This extension is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The purpose of this information kit is to:

• Inform GPs about the Respecting Patient Choices Program and their role in the Program
• Promote a health outcome that is positive for the patient
• Provide support for GP to consult patients on wishes for care
• Assist GPs to participate in the advance care planning process
• Assist GPs to complete advance care planning documentation

The Information kit covers:

• The Respecting Patient Choices Program
• Advance care planning and end of life care in Victoria
• Steps to develop an Advance Care Plan
• Using an Advance Care Plan

Another version of the GP Information Kit will be developed for all GPs that would like more information about the advance care planning process. These GPs would include any GPs in participating sites implementing the Respecting Patient Choices Program under the DHS HARP funding. That is Eastern Health, Northern Health and St Vincent’s Health.