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ADVANCE CARE PLANNING IN GENERAL PRACTICE

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Barwon Health's (BH) Respecting Patient Choices (RPC) program together with the local General Practitioner's (GP) Association and two GP developed a project plan to implement a model of advance care planning (ACP) into General Practice over a 6-month period.

The aims of the project were to increase the awareness and uptake of ACP by GP patients. Also, to demonstrate an increased participation in ACP whereby there is an established rapport and confidence with the doctor and provide a sustainable ACP model for general practice.

State and federal governments supports the accessibility of ACP for all Australians, yet there is no specific funding item number to support ACP in a cost effective manner in general practice. However, the provision of appropriate care for patients and the ripple effect for future savings in the acute sector has the potential to demonstrate overall benefits.

Patients tend to expect their GP's, with whom they trust and have an established rapport, to initiate ACP or end of life discussions. Project outcomes reflect this notion and demonstrate that, by utilising staff from a funded RPC® program, a cost effective ACP model for General Practice is viable, with patients having a high rate of acceptance, participation and satisfaction.

It is a recommendation that specialty services provided by ACP staff (RPC program), who would otherwise facilitate ACP for those referred into the service from GPs, should be expanded and resourced to provide outreach ACP Facilitators to General Practice in order for the continuation of a highly effective, viable model.

REFERENCE

Bloomer M, *et al.* End of life care. The importance of advance care planning. *J Aust Fam Phys*, 2010;**39**:737.