

#HospiceLink

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End of Life Choice – Assisted Dying

Assisted dying became legal in New Zealand from 7 November 2021. The introduction of assisted dying means that a person with a terminal illness who meets the criteria can request medication to end their life. The Ministry of Health is responsible for the The Act and sets out the legal framework for accessing assisted dying, eligibility criteria.

To be eligible, a person must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be aged 18yrs or over AND
- Be a citizen or permanent resident of NZ AND
- Suffer from a terminal illness that is likely to end their life within six months AND
- Be in an advanced state of irreversible decline in physical capacity AND
- Experience unbearable suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that the person considers tolerable AND
- Be competent to make an informed decision about assisted dying

A person cannot receive assisted dying solely because they are suffering from a mental disorder or mental illness, have a disability or are of advanced age

Over the last quarter reported -1 Oct 2022 – 31st Dec 2022

- 218 people applied for Assisted Dying
- 95 did not continue with application
- 102 people had an Assisted Death
- (Home=86 (84.3%), ARC=4 (3.9%), DHBs=9 (8.8%), Hospice=3 (2.8%))

Assisted dying can not be raised by health care professionals. The person seeking it as an option for themselves must raise it with them. A person cannot use an advanced directive to request assisted dying in the future as they need to meet the criteria, be competent and be able to have understanding at the time of the request. Whanau, carers, welfare guardians or activated EPOA cannot request or make a decision about assisted dying on a person's behalf.

Both the medical practitioner treating the person and a second, independent, medical practitioner must agree the person is eligible for assisted dying.

If either medical practitioner is unsure of the person's competence to make an informed decision, a psychiatrist must also assess the person to confirm eligibility. If the opinion is reached that the person is not eligible, the process ends.

Where we stand...

We acknowledge and respect the options that patients may now consider as part of the provisions of the End of Life Choice Act. We do not provide assisted dying services (as holistic palliative care practice neither hastens or postpones death occurring) nor do our staff, contractors, and volunteers participate in any interventions.

Hospice Taranaki provides compassionate and non-judgmental care to all of our patients .

We remain dedicated to providing excellent palliative care services and support patients with their palliative care needs, whether they choose assisted dying or not. We will continue to walk alongside our patients and their whānau whatever decision. We provide our holistic palliative care to our patients wherever they are – Hospice, Hospital, Aged Care.

What you need to know!

The person requesting assisted dying must be the first to raise it – and be clear in what they are asking you.

A health professional cannot suggest assisted dying as an option or initiate discussion unless the person has done so first.

If someone asks you about options (i.e. palliative care) you cannot suggest assisted dying.

The Act overrides several of the Code of Rights

*Right 6 - *The right to be fully informed*

*Right 7 - *The right to make an informed choice and give informed consent*

It is important to think about how you will respond if assisted dying is raised with you??

Remember we have obligations to provide the person who has raised assisted dying with the information for SCENZ, or to direct them onto someone else ie GP whom they can discuss this further with. You should thank them for bringing it up with you, and that you will help them to get the information they need. If you felt comfortable, or confident, you could explore further if they have any worries, concerns, fears that they may wish to talk to you about. This could also be an opportunity to discuss symptom control and palliative care if appropriate. If they indicate they wish to discuss this with their GP, remember to tell the patient that THEY need to be the one to initiate the conversation, the GP can not start the conversation about assisted dying.

If a friend/relative asks about assisted dying you can direct them to general information about the service from the Ministry or health or SCENZ



PREPARING FOR CONVERSATIONS

- Entering into conversations about topics that are emotive or where opinions may differ can be challenging.
- When assisted dying is raised it is helpful to be prepared so you can respond respectfully, appropriately and in an informed way.
- Build your knowledge of the Act including you role and responsibilities .
- Understand the eligibility criteria for assisted dying.
- Know who to rely on for support with these conversations and that it may be helpful to debrief with a colleague or professional supervisor following a conversation, remembering to act professionally whilst maintaining confidentiality.
- It is very important to firstly know the position and policies of your organisation

RESPONDING WHEN A PERSON RAISES ASSISTED DYING A HANDBOOK FOR REGISTERED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

There are three e-learning modules available for all health professionals. These can be completed individually or as a group learning tool. [Click here](#)

1. End of Life Choice Act 2019: Overview – this e-learning module provides an overview of the Act, including a practitioner's rights and responsibilities.
2. Assisted dying care pathway: Overview – this e-learning module explains the process for accessing assisted dying, including the roles of different health practitioners.
3. Responding when a person raises assisted dying – this e-learning module is to support practitioners to respond respectfully and appropriately when a person raises assisted dying, including best practice communication skills.

BRAIN TEASER

Each month our newsletter will have a puzzle, activity or brainteaser. Submit your answers to [Paula](#)

Last months answer was "Ä violin"
Congratulations to Shareen Pulumbarit
from Summerset Mountain View

This months brain teaser:

What can you hold without ever touching or using your hands?

Upcoming Education

Hospice New Zealand Palliative Care Lecture series

6th July 2023

Resilience/Grief Dr Lucy Hone

Dr Lucy Hone is a director of the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing & Resilience, a research associate at AUT University

Time: 7.30am – 8.30am

Watch them wherever you are, you'll be able to access all you need for the lecture via a private webpage - [watch now](#)

If you wish to listen to earlier lectures, please go to - [listen now](#)

Syringe Driver Competency

Wednesday 5 July: 1 pm – 3 pm

Syringe Driver Refresher

Wednesday 12 July: 1pm-2.30pm

[Click here](#)