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The Principal Research Officer
Select Committee on End of Life Choices Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

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Dear Sir/Madam,

End of Life issues have tended to emerge periodically in the WA Parliament.

I would like to commend the decision of the WA Parliament to establish a Parliamentary committee to look into the End of Life Choices in WA.

The establishment of a Parliamentary Committee for End of Life Choices reflects the progressive nature of the Western Australian Parliament. It reveals that the government is actually interested in delving into the details of this period of life to ensure that informed decisions are made.....

How do we define End of Life?

It could be the last hours, days or months of a person's life, when they have a life limiting illness.

Is it important to diagnose the End of Life?

Certainly, as it gives the patient and the family the unique opportunity to plan the limited future in store for them....

How good are we in diagnosing the End of Life?

Not very good. There is some degree of certainty when a patient has a malignant diagnosis. However, it is not very easy when it is a non-malignant condition like end stage heart failure or end stage renal failure as the prognosis can be in multiple months or years.

Palliative care is that branch of Medicine which is intimately involved to improve the quality of life of the person during the end of life phase. Interestingly, Palliative Care deals with not only Death and Dying issues, they are involved in ensuring that the patient continues to live well till the time of death arrives. This care is then extended to the family during the bereavement period.

Palliative Care does not hasten or prolong a patient's life. It affirms that death is a normal progression to an end point of some diseases and indeed of life.

End of life phase can be made smoother if there are discussions and plans put in place prior to the death. This can be done in the form of Advanced Health Directives. This document is like a Will which a patients make advising the family and health professionals as to how they

would like their end of life to look like. Making an AHD (Advance Health Directive) is a process which opens up discussions with patients and their families. It gives them an opportunity to have the discussions in a stress free environment rather than trying to decide what the patient would have wanted when an emergency occurs.

So how do we want the End of Life Choices to look like in WA?

- To give an opportunity to all the patients facing End of life to access Palliative Care.
- To ensure that there is funding for Palliative Care services especially in the regional areas.
- To focus our energies to inform patients re Advanced Health Directives. To popularize the concept of Advanced Health Directives.

Kind regards

Dr Ashwini Davray