

PRIMARY CARE 10 TOP TIPS

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on Advance Care Planning (ACP) – known as Advance/Anticipatory Care Planning in Scotland

1 Appreciate your role
Primary care professionals are often the key people to have these challenging conversations.

2 Don't avoid ACP conversations
You may fear upsetting patients, but 9 out of 10* patients appreciate the opportunity for these conversations and continue them either at the time or later.

3 Understand the need for ACP conversations
They will help you to a) know what is important to your patients b) support them in deciding on appropriate care and c) prevent crisis situations.

4 Keep the conversation patient-centred
The patient's wishes and preferences are key to effective ACP. The patient will need to have capacity to make an Advance Care Plan. In Scotland an Anticipatory Care Plan can be made even if a person lacks capacity.

5 Know how to start the conversation
Some patients give cues that they are ready to start; others may need a prompt such as, 'many people at times like this want to discuss the future'. Be guided by the patient, but ensure you avoid rushing. There is no time-scale for completing ACP. You can carry the conversation into other appointments.

6 Think about including a family member in the ACP conversation
It can provide support for the patient and facilitates communication within families. Some families shy away from discussing ACP so emphasise the importance of letting the patient talk about the future, if that's what they want.

7 Be honest and avoid false reassurance
This can give patients a sense of control, which fosters hope, even in

terminal illness. Phrases like 'don't worry' imply that you are unwilling to answer difficult questions.

8 Ask open questions, listen, then record and share (with permission)
If the patient allows it, let their wishes be known to family, key professionals and out-of-hours services. Remember that an Advance Care Plan should be patient-held.

9 Prepare yourself and your trainees
Make sure you get appropriate training and have information available to give to your patients (see tip 10). Many patients appreciate these conversations are difficult for professionals too, so don't worry about trying to be perfect.

'Advance Care Planning' was initially used for the process of making plans that would be invoked only if someone lost capacity or the ability to communicate but now is used more generally for any plans that record someone's preferences and choices for future care.

10 Use Resources
Patient resources:
Order or download *Your Life and Your Choices: Plan Ahead* from be.macmillan.org.uk

Professional resources:
Access Macmillan's ACP toolkit at LearnZone.org.uk/advancecareplanning

Find out about Macmillan/Dying Matters workshops or other relevant training sessions in your area by asking your local Macmillan GP.

Listen to Atul Gawande's 2014 3rd Reith Lecture on BBC Radio iPlayer or the Radio 4 website.

*The Dying Matters GP Pilot (2011)
www.dyingmatters.org/page/gp-pilot-project