Medical Assistance in Dying: What Nurses Need to Know

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Questions?

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- Subject Heading: Teleconference
Objectives

To enhance understanding of:

- the legislation
- the nurses role
- NP authority and accountability
CNO Documents

- Guidance on Nurses’ Roles in Medical Assistance in Dying
- CNO Standards and Guidelines can be found on the website
How Did We Get Here?

- *Carter, 2015*
- Bill C-14
  - Nurse Practitioner
  - Nursing
  - Pharmacy
Definitions

Two forms of medical assistance in dying include:

1. Clinician-assisted
2. Client self-administered
Conscientious Objection

Nurses who conscientiously object:

- must transfer the care of a client to another nurse or provider
- continue to provide nursing care, as per a client’s care plan until a replacement caregiver is found
RN and RPN Role

- Must understand the eligibility criteria
- **Must not** administer:
  - medication that is intended to end life
- Can participate by:
  - providing nursing care
  - aiding an NP or Physician
Nurse Practitioner Role
NP Legal Authority

For clients who have requested medical assistance in dying, the law allows NPs to:

- determine eligibility
- provide a second opinion
- administer a medication that will cause death
- provide a medication for the client to self-administer
When is the NP Required to Refer?

- NPs who do not personally provide medical assistance in dying must refer the client to another NP or physician who provides this service.

- The NP may not be the appropriate provider if they:
  - conscientiously object
  - may not have the competence
  - are not able to order required controlled substances
Eligibility Criteria

- The law states that the client:
  - must be at least 18 years of age
  - be capable of making decisions about their health
  - voluntarily request medical assistance in dying
  - give informed consent
  - have a grievous and irremediable medical condition
  - be eligible to receive health services funded by government in Canada
Consent and Capacity

- The client must be capable throughout the process
- Advanced directives cannot be used
- Consent can not be provided by a substitute decision maker
Ensuring Safeguards are Met

The law requires:

- a written request from the client signed by two independent witnesses
- a second opinion from an independent NP or physician
- mandatory waiting period
Providing Medical Assistance in Dying

- Use evidence to select appropriate medications
- Refer to a physician if controlled substances are required
  - it is illegal for NPs to prescribe controlled substances
- Notify the pharmacist of the prescription’s purpose
- Obtain consent from the client immediately before administering or providing the client with medication
- Report all deaths to the chief coroner - only the coroner is authorized to complete the medical certificate of death
College Resources

- College documents:
  - Medical Assistance in Dying
  - Medication Practice Standard
  - Authorizing Mechanisms
  - Nurse Practitioner
  - Professional Standards
  - Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationships

- College Website: www.cno.org/tools
Contact Us

- Practice support line
  - 416-928-0900 x 6397; Toll-free: 1-800-387-5526
  - Email: PPD@cnomail.org

- Outreach Consultants:
  www.cno.org/prac/outreach
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