

A photograph of a snowy winter landscape. A winding path, possibly a road or a trail, is visible, covered in snow and showing some tracks. The path curves through a field of snow, with several bare trees scattered throughout. The background shows a dense line of trees under a bright sky. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

The Palliative Approach... As you start your dementia journey.

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Objectives

- Discuss palliative approach
- Recognize importance of conversations about end of life early in dementia journey
- Identify potential care decisions
- Learn strategies to approach these conversations

Palliative Approach

- Improves quality of life
- Reduces suffering
- Physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual needs



Importance of End of Life Conversations

- Family members often need to make difficult decisions
- Ensures person receives the care they want
- Proactive approach
- Less distress at end-of-life for everyone

What to Discuss

- Substitute decision maker
- Medical interventions
- Wishes, values and beliefs
- Special requests
- Preferred place of death



Substitute Decision Maker

- A trusted person
- Will make decisions based on person's wishes, not their own
- Priority list if no one designated



Medical Interventions: Questions to Ask

- Treatable or untreatable conditions?
- Comfort? Side effects?
- How will symptoms be managed?
- Hospitalization?
- Painful?
- What will happen next?
- What is expected with no treatment?

Medical Interventions: Treatment Options

- CPR and ventilators
- Antibiotics
- Medications with side effects
- Feeding
- Intravenous hydration
- Invasive testing and procedures



Wishes, Values and Beliefs

- Person-centred care
- Circumstances will never be exactly what you discussed
- Therefore their wishes, values and beliefs will guide you when making decisions

Special Requests

- Family and friends nearby
- Music playing
- Faith or cultural rituals



Preferred place of death

- Transfer to hospital?
- What does the chosen location dictate about available care?



How is All This Remembered?

- Health Care Directive
- ERIK
- Conversations
- Advanced Care Plan

Strategies...

Preparing for the Conversation

- Important to have a general understanding of the progression of the disease and typical care needs near end of life
- Choose the best time



Strategies...

Starting the Conversation

- “If you were ever not able to tell doctors what your wishes were...”
- A friend’s experience
- Pick up on a news story or situation in a movie you watched together
- Take the opportunity when the person with dementia brings it up

Conclusion

- Have the conversation early
- Be ready to make decisions that take into account the person's stated wishes, values, and beliefs—circumstances may change
- Difficult but critical conversation

Provincial Office Contact

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