

Medical Assistance in Dying: What Nurses Need to Know

July 2016

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

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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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