

Helping Patients Plan Their Future:

The Role of GPs in Supporting Advance Care

by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)

As Singapore promotes greater awareness of Advance Care Planning (ACP), General Practitioners (GPs) are key in helping patients reflect on their healthcare preferences. Equipped with the right tools, GPs can support patients in making informed decisions, so their values and wishes are considered even when they are no longer able to voice them themselves.

What exactly is Advance Care Planning?

At its core, ACP is about preparation and reflection. It is an ongoing process that enables individuals to reflect on their healthcare and personal care preferences. It involves conversations where people communicate their values, beliefs and healthcare wishes to their loved ones and healthcare team. When individuals are no longer able to make decisions themselves, ACP helps ensure that surrogate decision-makers and healthcare providers can act in alignment with the individual's prior expressed wishes, supporting their best interest.

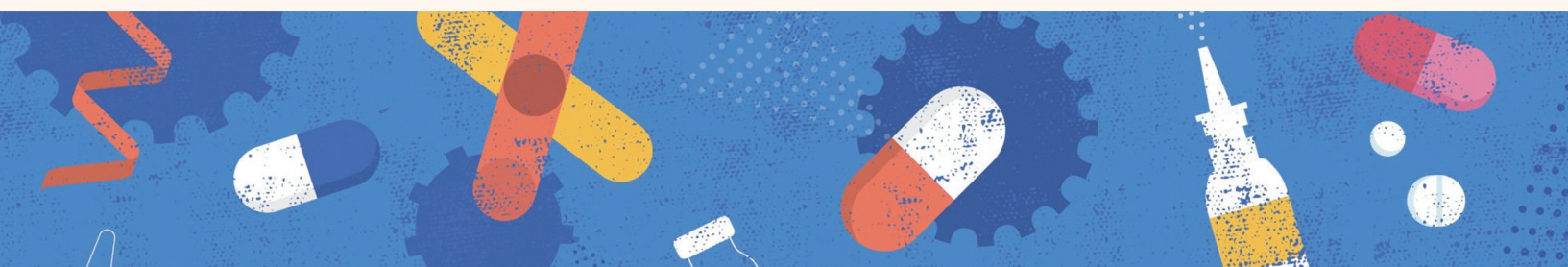
ACP is not just about filling out forms; it is about facilitating meaningful discussions on health priorities, values and life goals. While these conversations can be challenging, they are crucial in ensuring that care decisions align with an individual's vision of their future well-being.



The benefits of ACP

ACP offers significant benefits for both patients and their families. Perhaps most notably, it can reduce the emotional strain on families during a health crisis. Having a documented record of someone's healthcare preferences can alleviate the pressure of making difficult decisions at a time of uncertainty. ACP also fosters trust between healthcare providers, patients and families by aligning care with personal values, which can ultimately improve the patient's quality of life.

For those with chronic illnesses or complex care needs, ACP helps to clarify treatment goals and better guide care teams to meet the individual's needs. By promoting care that respects personal values, ACP helps to enhance both dignity and autonomy, ensuring that care remains tailored to what matters most to the individual.



A national push for ACP: The Legacy Planning Campaign

In July 2023, a major step was taken to raise awareness and make ACP more accessible across Singapore. The Legacy Planning Campaign, launched by an inter-ministerial workgroup involving AIC, the Ministry of Health, Central Provident Fund Board, Ministry of Social and Family Development, and Public Service Division, aims to spotlight ACP as a key tool in legacy planning. Along with CPF nominations, Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) and wills, ACP is part of a suite of documents that allows individuals to ensure their wishes are known and respected — whether in healthcare, welfare or financial matters.

The campaign seeks to make ACP a part of everyday conversations by partnering with grassroots organisations, employers, religious institutions and other stakeholders. The objective is to **help Singaporeans understand that planning for future care is essential** to maintaining control over their health and well-being.

What can GPs do to support ACP?

For all your patients

Many patients may not be familiar with ACP or its importance. This is where GPs can step in by sharing information. Resources such as brochures, booklets and bite-sized videos in multiple languages can help demystify ACP. These resources are readily available and GPs may request for them via the '[ACP Collaterals Request](#)' form or by scanning the QR code. These tools can be shared directly in the clinic to help initiate the conversation.



ACP Collaterals Request Form

For patients interested in ACP

When patients express interest in ACP, GPs can direct them to resources and professionals who can guide them through the process. The [MyLegacy](#) and [AIC](#) websites provide a wealth of information, including a [directory of ACP facilitators](#) who can help individuals complete their ACP documentation. GPs may encourage patients to explore these resources and ensure they have the support they need to make informed decisions.



MyLegacy



ACP on AIC.sg



ACP Facilitators

For the digitally savvy

The upcoming digital ACP tool, set to launch in the first quarter of FY25, will allow individuals to document their own preferences online. This tool is suited for those comfortable with technology who want to complete their ACP independently. AIC will notify GPs when the digital tool is ready and you may encourage your patients to use it when it becomes available.

Making ACP a part of the healthcare conversation

Ultimately, ACP is about creating a healthcare environment where patients feel in control of their care, their voices are heard, and their values guide the decisions made about their health. By initiating ACP conversations and providing the right resources, GPs play a crucial role in making this vision a reality. As Singapore continues to promote awareness and accessibility of ACP, we can look forward to a future where more individuals are prepared and empowered to make decisions about their care — today, tomorrow and in the years to come.

