



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

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**Resident physicians advocate for public education around advanced care planning and goals of care**

**March 20, 2017, Edmonton, AB** – Alberta’s resident physicians are meeting with MLAs today to advocate for raising public awareness around the importance of advanced care planning and goals of care. These meetings are part of the annual Resident Physicians in the Legislature (RIL) advocacy event.

“Advanced care planning and establishing Goals of Care Designations (GCDs) play a critical role in providing optimal patient-centered care for all Albertans,” says Dr. Hilary Kornder, an Edmonton family medicine resident physician and chair of RIL. “There is a lot of confusion around what constitutes advanced care planning versus personal directives, living wills and enduring powers of attorney, which can lead to significant stress for patients and their families during times of illness. Our hope as resident physicians is to increase public awareness and help facilitate these important discussions in a timely manner.”

The majority of Albertans have not discussed their health care wishes with a clinician; many patients are unfamiliar with goals of care until they enter into the acute care system. “Early discussions with patients around goals of care and advanced care planning allow physicians and other health care providers to respect their patients’ wishes, and to better support patients and their families during times of great stress,” says Kornder.

Alberta has several existing resources that can be used to educate patients and health care providers, however, many Albertans are unaware of them. Kornder and her resident physician colleagues believe the key is raising awareness of the topic and the available resources, empowering Albertans with the knowledge to remain actively involved in their health care.

“As front-line health care providers, we experience first-hand the stress and uncertainty that patients and their families experience as a result of this lack of awareness and preparedness. Unfortunately, this can directly affect a patient’s illness experience. By showcasing some of the great resources already available to us, our hope is to offer optimal patient care that is in keeping with the patient’s wishes.”

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## Goals of Care Backgrounder/Fact Sheet

### What are resident physicians advocating for?

- Alberta's resident physicians support a public awareness campaign aimed at increasing Albertans' understanding around Goals of Care and Advanced Care Planning, as well as the important role GCDs play in ensuring they receive the highest quality care possible

### Why is Advanced Care Planning/Goals of Care important for Albertans?

- Advanced Care Planning, specifically Goals of Care, plays a critical role in providing optimal patient-centered care for all Albertans.
- Early discussions around Goals of Care allow physicians and other allied health care providers to better respect patient wishes and support patients and their families during difficult times.

### What are Goals of Care?

- Goals of Care Designation (GCD) documents reflect a patient's predetermined medical wishes in the event they are incapable of communicating them at a time of acute illness
- GCDs are kept in a "Green Sleeve" (a plastic pocket) near the refrigerator of the patient's home – medical personnel know to look there in the event of an emergency
- 60% of Albertans have discussed treatment wishes with family; **only 20% of Albertans have discussed treatment wishes with a clinician**
- 80% of patients who enter the hospital system will complete a GCD during their stay, as documenting and implementing GCDs is now routine practice for patients being admitted to hospital and for those brought into the emergency department with life threatening conditions
  - This does not account for the majority of Albertans who haven't used the hospital/acute care system
  - The most appropriate time to discuss goals of care is when a patient is well and competent, before an emergent health concern arises
  - Albertans need to be educated about the importance of these discussions
- Initiating discussions around GCD and Advanced Care Planning in a non-urgent manner allows Albertans time to access resources, ask questions, speak with their family members, and follow up with their physicians to ensure their GCD are respected if and when the time comes
- GCDs have potential to conserve resources by reducing the numbers of undesired interventions
- There are a number of programs/resources in Alberta that could be used to help educate patients and care providers, however many Albertans are not familiar with these resources

## **Resident Physician/RIL fact sheet**

Residency training has a rich tradition. The term 'resident' reflects that these medical trainees used to literally live within the hospital, providing intense, round-the-clock care to patients during their training. While resident physicians no longer live within the hospital, they do provide a significant portion of the overnight and after hours care in acute care facilities across Alberta.

### **Who is a resident physician?**

- Resident physicians are often a patient's first physician contact in teaching hospitals and clinics across the province
- Following the completion of a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) program, resident physicians undergo further training, known as residency, which prepares them for licensure under either the College of Family Physicians of Canada or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
- Resident physicians generally have at least eight years of university training prior to the commencement of residency
- With residency programs requiring an additional two to seven years of post-graduate training, most resident physicians spend more than 10 years training to become fully-licensed physicians

### **What is Resident Physicians in the Legislature (RIL)?**

- RIL is a continuing advocacy event providing resident physicians in Alberta the opportunity to foster relationships with their elected representatives and senior government officials
- RIL is a non-partisan event that focuses on issues relevant to the health of all Albertans
- RIL raises awareness of resident physicians and their distinct perspectives on issues of importance to patient care in Alberta

*The Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta (PARA) is the voice of the more than 1,700 resident physicians providing round-the-clock medical care to Albertans in acute care hospitals and outpatient facilities. PARA advocates excellence in education and patient care while striving to achieve optimal working conditions and personal well-being for all its members. [www.para-ab.ca](http://www.para-ab.ca)*