



Message from Lori

A message from Winnipeg Health Region Chief Nursing Officer, Lori Lamont

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) Guidance for Nurses in the WRHA

Medical assistance in dying (MAID) is now legal in Canada. For the first time, people can receive help in ending their life. This is permissible when the person is a competent adult in an advanced state of irreversible decline from an illness, disease, or disability that causes enduring and intolerable suffering to them and where their natural death is reasonably foreseeable.

Every question from a patient about assisted death signifies that the patient is, or is worried about, suffering and is an opening for a dialogue with that individual. It is important for us, as nurses, to explore the reasons for the request in order to understand what supports might be helpful, and whether the patient has unmet needs. Whether or not a nurse is prepared to be involved in any way in assisting someone to die, they remain a part of the team caring for the patient. Nurses should advocate for their patients, including the pursuit of aggressive symptom management strategies, to ensure every opportunity to relieve suffering is offered. Nurses should also understand the process for MAID, and their professional role in the process.

Any nurse could be asked by a patient or family member about assisted death. For some, it might be an exploration of options, or simple information-seeking. For others, their questions may indicate intent to pursue an assisted death. Please talk to your supervisor and team if a patient would like to proceed with a formal request.

At the moment, formal requests are referred to the Provincial Clinical Team responsible for MAID. This team also acts as a resource for patients, families, and health care professionals. They can be reached by email at maid@wrha.mb.ca, or by phone at 204-926-1380.

Patients who make a formal request for MAID will be assessed by members of the Provincial Clinical Team to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria, and that they are capable of making an informed, voluntary decision. The process involves multiple sessions with the patient, and nurses can be involved at any stage. Providing basic information about medical assistance in dying or where to make a request is not against the law, nor is being involved with the assessments. Nurses may participate in the assisted death itself if eligibility criteria for the patient have been met.

Nurses are not required to participate in the provision of MAID; however, nurses may not abandon a patient and are required to attend to their care needs. Whether or not a patient has requested the service of MAID, nurses are required to continue providing any routine care that is not related to MAID.

Nurses who do choose to become directly involved in any aspect of MAID, from providing information to participating in an assisted death with the Provincial Clinical Team are protected by law. Please remember, the process of obtaining information, undergoing assessment, and having the procedure, is a

progression. It is possible for you to participate in one aspect but choose to be absent at the time of the procedure. Nurses must communicate any objection, anticipated or current to their supervisor as soon as they become aware there may be a conflict.

This is a major change in nursing practice and not all details are clear yet. Nursing Codes of Ethics provide direction for nurses who have a moral objection to certain procedures or practices a patient may choose. If you have questions or concerns about the nursing role in assisted dying, or would like to express your personal feelings on it, please speak to your supervisor, regulatory college, or the Provincial MAID Team.

For more information visit the WRHA MAID website at: <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/maid/index.html>