

## WHO DECIDES ON THE RIGHT PATH FOR YOU?

Recently, nothing has sparked more fear and controversy when considering elderly and palliative care than the Liverpool Care Pathway. First introduced in the late 1990's in a joint venture between Royal Liverpool University Hospital and Marie Curie Hospice, the care pathway was initially developed with terminally ill cancer patients in mind in order to ensure that their final days and hours were handled with dignity.

Since the 1990's, the pathway has been extended to include all patients deemed to be at the end of life however, recently the scheme has come under heavy criticism in the media, with some claiming that the NHS is using the pathway as a way of prematurely ending the life of older people who have now become a 'drain' on the NHS. These claims have been further enhanced by the findings that almost two thirds of NHS trusts using the Liverpool Care Pathway have received payouts totalling millions of pounds for hitting targets related to its use. So, is there any truth in these claims or is it just another 'moral panic.'

Despite the scheme not being operational in Scotland, with Scotland implementing its own action plan, *Living and Dying Well*, the Scottish Government has released a position statement supporting the appropriate use of the Liverpool Care Pathway and sees it as "not in any way about ending life, but rather about supporting the delivery of excellent end of life care, to the benefit of patients and their families."

The guidelines, as set out under the scheme, are that the pathway is a "way of transferring the model of 'excellence' in the care provided

in hospices to other healthcare settings such as hospitals and care homes."

The pathway requires that staff ensure all decisions to either continue or to stop a treatment are taken in the best interest of each patient. As it is not always easy to tell whether someone is very close to death, a decision to consider using the Liverpool Care Pathway should always be made by the most senior doctor available, with help from all the other staff involved in a patient's care. It should be countersigned as soon as possible by the doctor responsible for the patient's care.



There is a specific emphasis that patients should be involved in decisions about their care, where possible, and that carers and family members should **always** be included in the decision making process. One of the main aims is to prevent dying patients the distress of receiving unnecessary treatment and tests that may actually be harmful to them.

Staff must also be fully trained and have a thorough understanding of palliative care and how to best treat patients in the final days and hours of their lives. It is also a key principle of the pathway that careful monitoring and evaluation will take place in all places the pathway is in use.

The Scottish Government are keen to stress that the pathway in no way replaces clinical judgement and is not a treatment but instead, a framework for good practice.

**At present, the SPF holds no formal position on the use of the pathway in end of life care but feels that further investigation is needed before committing to a formal statement.**



**"The pathway is there to support and inform decisions in a way that best meets an individual's needs when they are nearing the end of their life"**  
Alex Neil MSP, Health Minister

## ADVANCED STATEMENTS - MAKING SURE YOUR OPINION MATTERS

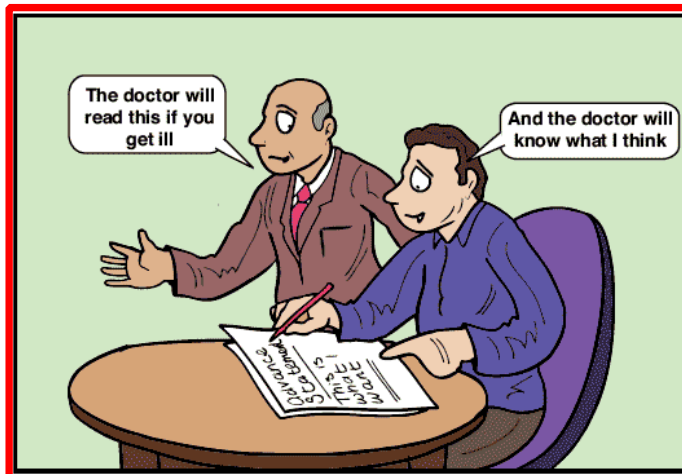
The best way to ensure that any decision taken on your health care best reflects your wishes is to complete an advanced statement. Although not legally binding, the statement **MUST** be taken into consideration by those responsible for administering and deciding on a proper care plan for you.

### What is an Advanced Statement?

The advanced statement is a document written by you that best conveys your preferences, wishes, beliefs and values in relation to your future care. The aim of this statement is to provide a concise guide to anyone who may have to make important decisions on your behalf if you have lost the ability to make decisions or communicate effectively by yourself.

### What should it include?

The statement can include how you may want any religious or spiritual beliefs to be reflected in your care, where you would like to be cared for, whether it be at home, hospital environment or care home and also more practical issues like who will take care of bills etc if you become ill.



### Will they take it seriously?

By writing things down, you can help make things clear to your family, friends, carers and health professionals about what is best for you. The statement will be considered as long as you have the mental capacity to make it and you can write it with the help of relatives and friends or other people responsible for your care.

### How will they know it reflects my wishes?

An advance statement does not have to be signed, however, a signature offers the document credibility and clarifies that it is your wishes that have been conveyed therein.

### Should I tell anyone about it?

Always remember that you have the final say in who sees the document. Keep it somewhere safe, and tell people where it is in case they need to find it in the future. You can also ask your doctor to keep a copy in your medical notes.

### What is the Difference?

An advanced statement is not the same as an advanced decision which is an informed choice on treatment for your future care and is a legally binding document. The SPF does not support this or any other decision you may take

on your own health care.

*The above information is from NHS Choices End of Life Care Plan and the SPF hope that the basic premise is upheld ie: that a patient's wishes will be taken into consideration irrespective of financial constraints*

## Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Application forms can be requested from:

Scottish Pensioners' Forum,

333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6NG

Telephone 0141 337 8113

or at: [www.scottishpensioners.org.uk](http://www.scottishpensioners.org.uk)

## Look Closer, Nurse

*What do you see, nurses, what do you see?  
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?  
A crabby old woman, not very wise,  
Uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes?  
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply  
When you say in a loud voice, "I do wish you'd try!"  
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,  
and  
Forever is losing a stocking or shoe.....  
Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will,  
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill....  
Is that what you're thinking?  
Is that what you see?  
Then open your eyes, nurse; you're not looking at  
me.*

*I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,  
As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.  
I'm a small child of ten ....with a father and  
mother,  
Brothers and sisters, who love one another.  
A young girl of sixteen, with wings on her feet,  
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.  
A bride soon at twenty -- my heart gives a leap,  
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.  
At twenty-five now, I have young of my own,  
Who need me to guide and a secure happy home.  
A woman of thirty, my young now grown fast,  
Bound to each other with ties that should last.  
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,  
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.  
At fifty once more, babies play round my  
knee,*

*Again we know children, my loved one and me.  
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead;  
I look at the future, I shudder with dread.  
For my young are all rearing young of their own,  
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.*

*I'm now an old woman ...and nature is cruel;  
'Tis jest to make old age look like a fool.  
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigour depart,  
There is now a stone where I once had a heart.  
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells,  
And now and again, my battered heart swells.  
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,  
And I'm loving and living life over again.*

*I think of the years ...all too few, gone too fast,  
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.  
So open your eyes, people, open and see,  
Not a crabby old woman; look closer ...see ME!!*



This poem was found in the possession of a woman who died in a geriatric nursing home near Dundee in 1966. Written in her longhand, it has been published all over the world.

For many years, the poem had been attributed to this unknown lady until very recently when it was verified that the poem was actually written by Phyllis McCormack, a nurse who worked at Sunnyside Hospital in Montrose, who wrote the poem for inclusion in her hospital newsletter but submitted it anonymously for fear of criticism from her nursing colleagues.

The poem has been quoted in various works written for and about the caring professions in order to highlight the importance of maintaining the dignity of the lives of elderly patients.

It seems just as appropriate now as it was when it was written almost 50 years ago.

I'm sure you'll agree!



## 22<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The 22nd Annual Conference of the Scottish Pensioners Forum will take place on **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013**, at Glasgow City Chambers.

The event is open to all SPF members and affiliated organisations, with this year's theme being "Why Demonise Pensioners: Our Today is Your Tomorrow."

We hope that you can come along and celebrate another successful year for the SPF.

## FORTHCOMING EVENT

Due to the recent changes to welfare reform, the SPF felt it necessary to hold a large scale event to allow pensioners to have their say and to voice their concerns over how these changes affect them.



A date has been set for **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2013** at Adelaide's, Bath Street, Glasgow and we have contacted some key speakers to come along on the day. As the event organisation is at the preliminary stages, we will contact our members with further details as they become available.

## INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

As the date for the Scottish Independence Referendum date has now been set for 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the SPF will be planning an event(s) over the coming months to discuss what this means for Scottish pensioners. Further details of these events will be made available through our website, newsletter and social media pages.



**Keep up to date with The Scottish Pensioners' Forum**

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