

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING—A PRIMER FOR RESIDENTS



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INFORMATION OPTIONS DOCTOR SERVICE
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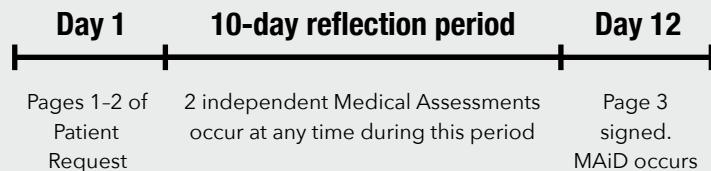
MAiD in end of life care

For many patients MAiD is seen as a way to end/avoid suffering and maintain control as they approach their end of life. However, MAiD is merely one option when it comes to end of life care. A request for MAiD should initiate a larger discussion about end-of-life goals, the types of suffering they are facing (the concept of Total Pain encompasses Physical, Social, Spiritual and Psychological causes), and their understanding of the options available to reduce that suffering including palliative care and palliative sedation.

The role of the Resident

- 1** Explore a patient's end-of-life goals, understanding of prognosis and causes of suffering or pain.
- 2** Discuss a patient's understanding of the options available to reduce current and future suffering.
- 3** Ensure the patient understands the MAiD process, arrange witnesses (if required) and request a Medical Assessment.
- X** **Cannot** act as a Medical Assessor, unless licensed for independent practice (see ► see CPSBC Guideline on page 2).

MAiD timeline



Patient Request Record

Patients complete Page 1 (► see Useful links on page 2).
NOTE: Patients must **not** sign the form until they are in the presence of their witnesses.

Patients who are physically unable to do so can elect a proxy (► Proxy eligibility). The proxy must sign in the presence of both the patient and the witnesses. If a patient requires a proxy but does not have one, the Dying With Dignity Society (► Useful links) can provide one.

The patient (or proxy) must sign page 3 immediately before MAiD takes place.

Witnesses

If a patient does not have witnesses (► Witness eligibility), the Dying With Dignity Society (► Useful links) can provide witnesses, often as soon as the next day.

Medical Assessments

Once a patient has expressed their desire for MAiD connect with a MAiD Provider (► Useful links). They will arrange the two Medical Assessments: the first is often done by the patient's GP and may take place prior to the Patient Request being completed; the second may be done by the MAiD provider.

Request withdrawal

At any time up to when MAiD is performed, a patient may withdraw their request.

Patient eligibility

- 18 years of age and has provincial/federal health care.
- **Has a grievous and irremediable medical condition** (serious illness, disease or disability).
- Is in an **advanced state of decline** that cannot be reversed.
- Is **suffering unbearably** from their illness, disease, disability or state of decline.
- Is at a point where their natural **death is reasonably foreseeable**, taking into account all of their medical circumstances.
- Has **voluntarily** requested MAiD.
- Has given informed consent **after** reviewing options to relieve their suffering, including palliative care and palliative sedation.

Witness eligibility

- 18 years of age and understands the nature of the request.
- **Does not know or believe they are a beneficiary under the patient's will, or in any other way** (financial or material) benefit from the patient's death.
- Is **not directly involved in providing health-care services or personal care** to the patient.
- Is not an owner or operator of the facility at which the patient resides or is being treated.

Proxy eligibility

- Must meet the first two points of Witness eligibility above.
- Can not witness on page 1 of the Patient Request Form, but can serve as a witness on page 3.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can patients add a MAiD request to their Advance Directive?

No. The law requires the patient to be capable of providing informed consent at the time of MAiD.

If the patient has a Power Of Attorney, or Designated Representative, can that person complete the forms?

No. The law requires the patient to make the request. A proxy can be used if they are physically unable to complete the form (► Proxy eligibility).

Who should I contact to submit the request for a Medical Assessment?

Please consult the list of providers (► Useful links). The patient's Family Physician should also be consulted/informed.

Is the 10-day waiting period mandatory?

No. The 10-day waiting period can be shortened if death is imminent or if there is risk of the patient becoming incapable of providing informed consent. The attending physician and MAs determine what constitutes a reasonable period of time based on the patient's medical condition and circumstances.

Does someone have to have a "terminal" illness to be eligible?

No. Having a fatal or terminal condition is not a requirement for MAiD.

Can someone at Island Health serve as a witness?

While Island Health sent out a memo (August 10, 2016) stating that employees can serve as witnesses (► Witness eligibility), some may choose not to.

Must both witnesses be present at the same time?

Yes. Parliament intended the patient to sign and date the request in front of two witness **at the same time**.

What are the options for medication delivery?

Patients can request oral or IV medications for MAiD.

If a patient changes their mind do they have to restart the process?

If the Patient Request Record is completed and both assessments conducted, the patient **may** be able to proceed with MAiD at a future date, without re-starting the process. This requires that 1) the request be re-started within a reasonable amount of time, 2) their cognitive status hasn't changed, and 3) the MAiD provider agrees.

What is palliative sedation?

The use of sedative medications to treat refractory symptoms or relieve intolerable suffering. The intention is not to hasten death.

Useful links

CPSBC Guideline cpsbc.ca/files/pdf/PSG-Medical-Assistance-in-Dying.pdf

Island Health MAiD site (includes a list of providers at the bottom of the page) intranet.viha.ca/clinical_resources/maid

CDN Assn of MAiD Assessors and Providers www.camapcanada.ca

Patient Request Record www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/forms/1632fil.pdf

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