

MEDIA RELEASE

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Dying pain-free is a human right

Painaustralia welcomes today's consensus statement – prepared by Palliative Care Australia, Consumers Health Forum of Australia and Carers Australia – which calls for adequate pain management in palliative care and end-of-life care.

An effective approach to pain management at end-of-life is essential for ensuring quality of life and supporting human dignity, however Australia is falling short.

The latest data indicate that 50 per cent of Australian adults and children with acute or cancer pain are being under-treated, despite the possibility of effective treatment for most patients.

For people with chronic pain, there are wait times from several months to more than a year, and many Australians are missing out on services, education and treatment that could help them effectively manage their pain and improve quality of life.

Dementia or other cognitive issues interfere with a patient's ability to communicate their pain, which escalates health issues and leads to further deterioration and poorer quality of life.

Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett says it is critical that palliative care strategies include a focus on pain management and person-centred care.

“Pain is common to many chronic conditions related to death and dying. As a developed country that cares for its citizens, we must ensure access to best-practice pain management at end-of-life.

“Early intervention to prevent or relieve pain should be a fundamental principal of palliative care, to allow people to die with dignity and free of pain.

“Dying pain-free is a human right, and our policies should ensure people have the ability to choose to die with adequate pain relief, which would allow them to remain focused on the good things in life and the people they love, not the pain.

“A person and family-centred approach to palliative care is also important, because pain affects entire families, not just individuals. There may also be cultural, spiritual or personal factors that influence a person's decisions around pain management and the level of pain relief they desire.

“Anything less is simply not good enough.”

One in five Australians lives with chronic pain (including adolescents and children) and one in three over the age of 65.

Painaustralia is calling for a national pain plan to ensure quality pain management for people as part of end-of-life care.

Media contact: Linda Baracioli

Phone: 0404 931 031

Website: www.painaustralia.org.au