Let’s Talk About Death

Hayley Rowson de Vares
Why is it so difficult to talk about death?

- UK has become a ‘death denying’ culture
- Death has become a ‘clinical event’ and ‘professionals know best’
- As individuals, we are not prepared to experience death, dying and bereavement
- We fear our own mortality, we fear talking about death, we suspect that talking about death brings it closer
- Poll in 2013 showed people feel more comfortable talking about sex than death
- Less than a third of people have discussed their wishes around dying with those meaningful to them
- 81% of people have not written down any preferences around their own end of life care
- Nearly two-thirds of people have not written a will – including a quarter of people over the age of 65
- As communities, we no longer have the knowledge or experience to support the dying or the bereaved
- As health and social care professionals, we are unprepared for discussions relating to death and dying
Why Talk About Death?

- Time is running out for all of us – if not now – then when?
- ‘Window of opportunity’ for people with dementia - facts illustrate the importance of talking openly about our wishes whilst we’re still healthy enough to influence our own care.
- Talking about death doesn’t bring death closer. It’s about planning for life. Without communication and understanding, death and terminal illness can be a lonely and stressful experience, both for the person who is dying and for their friends and family.
- Although 70% of people would prefer to die at home, out of the 500,000 people who die each year in England, 58% currently die in hospitals.
- Our population of aging and critically ill people increases constantly. Our communities and systems need to be equipped to meet our needs.
- Individuals and families speak of the peace of mind when they’ve known what a loved one wanted for their last days of living. By talking about our end of life wishes while we’re still healthy, we can not only influence our own future care, we can join together in communities to open up the discussion for others.
Opening the conversation

- **READY** – there are many reasons to avoid having ‘The Conversation’ but it is vital for our own peace of mind and for the peace of mind of those we leave behind

- **SET** – Think about what you want for your own end of life care, think about what’s important to you – what would you want, what wouldn’t you want?

- **GO** – Who do you need to talk to, when would be a good time to have this conversation, where would be a good time to have this conversation
Advance Care Planning for Cats

The Enabling Care Priorities Document

Resident Name: Jacqueline Cat
Address: Sherdley Court, 91, Rainhill Road, Prescot, Merseyside L35 4PD
DOB: 2002 – 3ish
Date Completed: 02/07/2013
Vet Details: PDSA Huyton, Woolfall Heath Ave, Liverpool L36 3YD
Family members involved in ECP discussion - all residents & staff present at the meeting held on Tuesday 02/07/13

At this time in her life, what makes Jacqueline happy / comfortable?
Jacqueline likes to be flea and worm free. She likes to be warm and comfortable and have access to fresh food (sachets only) and water. She likes to be stroked on her head only, and only when she is in the mood (she will let you know by nudging you with her nose).

What elements of care are important for Jacqueline and what would she like to happen?
Jacqueline likes to be stroked on the head only and only when she has requested it specifically. She likes her bed to be on the cupboard over the residents' computer so she can watch all proceedings from above. She needs to be fed and watered twice daily. She likes to have access to an open window so she can nip outside to survey her domain and warn off any intruding birds.

Is there anything you think worries Jacqueline or that she dreads happening? What would YOU not want to happen?
Jacqueline doesn’t like change and she doesn’t like strangers, particularly those rude strangers who go straight in for a stroke without suitable introduction or invitation from Herself.

Since the death of her owner Jonathan, and her brother, Hercules the mouse, both of whom she moved into Sherdley Court with, Jacqueline has developed positive relationships with residents and staff. She is an elderly lady cat and would not want to go back to the shelter from where Jonathan rescued her. She should therefore remain at Sherdley Court where she is loved and her needs are met.
Planning for a good death

- Make plans whilst you are still in good enough health to do so
- Tell your loved ones about what you would and wouldn't want in the event of deteriorating health
- Record your wishes as an Advance Care Plan and make sure they are communicated to family, friends and GP etc
- If there are treatments / procedures you definitely wouldn't want – make an Advance Directive
- If you would feel happier knowing that someone you trust would make decisions on your behalf in the event of deteriorating health – make a Power of Attorney
- Write your will and register it – avoid leaving difficult legal situations for family
- Record your funeral wishes – burial or cremation, songs, readings – pre-arrange your funeral if you can
- Write your bucket list - regret nothing

“You know all those things you've always wanted to do? You should go do them.”
Thank You