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Palliative care recognised at RPA

Talking with loved ones and health professionals about your needs and wishes for the end of your life may not be easy but it is the best way to ensure you receive the care you want, says a local health expert.

RPA Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Consultant, Joan Ryan, said National Palliative Care Week (May 20-26) was an opportunity for people to raise what could be an uncomfortable conversation and hence this year’s theme: ‘Let’s chat about dying’.

‘It’s never too early to chat about dying,” Mr Ryan said.

“Encouraging people to have end-of-life conversations ahead of time can help alleviate a lot of stress for families and carers, and avoid situations where they are asked to make decisions about a person’s care and don’t know what they would have wanted.

“It’s also important that these care preferences are recorded, preferably in an advance care plan, and that people share this with their loved ones and relevant health professionals,” she said.

Ms Ryan said visitors to RPA over the week would find a stall in the foyer with information about palliative care services and ways in which specialist staff could help those with a life-limiting illness.

“Specialist palliative care nurses, doctors and allied health staff are available in hospitals and community settings to help with the management of pain medications and monitoring of symptoms and to also assist in the planning of quality end-of-life care for patients and their families,” she said.

“Our main aim is to ensure that people are provided with the best quality care when they reach the end of their life and to help to make them as comfortable and dignified as possible.”

For further information, contact the Palliative Care Department at RPA on 95157755 or drop by the Hospital foyer stall.

Further information on National Palliative Care Week is available at www.palliativecare.org.au.