Voluntary Assisted Dying Board

Quality Practice Series #1 (Jan 2022)

Message from the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board Chair

Thank you for your involvement and support for Western Australians seeking to access this additional end-of-life choice. The Board acknowledges and appreciates the time and effort involved in supporting patients through the voluntary assisted dying process.

The purpose of the Board is to ensure proper adherence to the legislation and to recommend safety and quality improvements. As with any new process, there are lessons to be learnt and enhancements to practice that can be made. The Board has received feedback directly from practitioners as well as from the Community of Practice and will continue to welcome this input. Practitioners are also reminded that they can also provide feedback or share their personal experiences through completing a Personal Reflection (available here).

To support practitioners in their practice, the Board will produce a regular series of tips, reminders and practice points that focus on different areas of the voluntary assisted dying process. This is the first in the series and we hope you find it helpful.

Please do reach out to the Board Secretariat Unit via VADBoard@health.wa.gov.au if you have any questions or require additional assistance.

Dr Scott Blackwell
Chair - Voluntary Assisted Dying Board

Focus Area 1 – Forms

All forms

Please check all forms for completion of required details. Ensure that information is fully provided (e.g. include phone number) and that check boxes are ticked where necessary.

Submission of forms completed by a patient (and/or witnesses)

e.g. Contact Person Appointment Form, Written Declaration

Please check over these forms carefully prior to submission to ensure the details are correct as per the requirements outlined on the form. It may assist to walk through the form with the patient at the time it is provided to them. Guidance documents for patients to support completion of these forms will soon be available from the Department of Health.

Points of focus:

- Check that the Contact Person has included their phone number (ideally their email address as well) in Part C. Inclusion of these details enables the Board to provide the Contact Person with required information in a timely manner.
- On the Written Declaration, check the witnesses have completed the correct section (in Parts D and E) and also that the relevant check box relating to interpreter use has been completed (Part F).

Notification of Death Form – Administering Practitioner

If you have completed a *Practitioner Administration Form* you are not required to complete a *Notification of Death Form – Coordinating / Administering Practitioner* as well.

The *Notification of Death Form – Coordinating / Administering Practitioner* is required if you (as Coordinating / Administering Practitioner) become aware of the death of a patient that has not occurred via Practitioner Administration i.e. death via self-administration or from their underlying illness etc.

Practitioner Administration Form

Please ensure that the witness information in Part C is fully completed and that all practitioner certifications are ticked in Part F of the *Practitioner Administration Form.*

Form timeliness

All forms are to be submitted to the Board within two business days.

Edits to forms

If you require an edit to be made to a form that you have already submitted:

1) add a Note to the Episode detailing the required edit, and
2) send an email to the Board Secretariat Unit via VADBoard@health.wa.gov.au.

The Board Secretariat will update VAD-IMS with the edit or, if required, will be in contact with you to request resubmission of an amended version of the form.

Focus Area 2 – VAD Process

All processes

It is the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that the process steps are undertaken in the correct order. VAD-IMS has been designed to support practitioners with this where possible, but also to not block a next step that could reasonably occur before submission of a form. For example: referral for a Consulting Assessment must occur *after* the First Assessment is complete but may occur *before* the First Assessment form is actually submitted (as the Coordinating Practitioner has two business days to submit).

VAD activity data

On 24 November 2021, the Minister for Health provided an update in Parliament regarding the first four months of operation of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019*. This included recognition of those involved and information on activity data. The Hansard record can be accessed here (refer to page 5860).

Focus Area 3 – VAD-IMS

The Board acknowledges it is a challenge to adapt to both a new process and a new ICT system, and appreciates the patience shown by practitioners as they gain familiarity in use. For the majority of practitioners this is working smoothly. As with any new ICT system though there have been a few bugs (which are either now resolved or being actively worked on). Please contact the Board Secretariat Unit if you need assistance.

User Tip – Notes function in VAD-IMS

The Notes function within the patient episode can be used by those who have a relevant role in that patient's VAD process (e.g. Coordinating Practitioner, Consulting Practitioner, Administering Practitioner, Authorised Supplier).

Notes are associated with specific step in the process by selecting from the drop-down menu (this restricts visibility to the roles relevant to part of the process) or they can be General notes where appropriate to be seen by all those with access to that patient's Episode.

Suggested uses of Notes include:

- Adding extra details and/or documentation to a process step
  e.g. attachments can be uploaded to Notes (.pdf .doc .jpg etc)
- Adding relevant commentary to the Episode
  e.g. a Note that you have made a referral to a particular practitioner for a Consulting assessment
- Requesting edits to forms (also email the Board Secretariat Unit to alert to the need for an edit – some amendments will require complete resubmission of the form)

User Tip – Closure of episodes in VAD-IMS

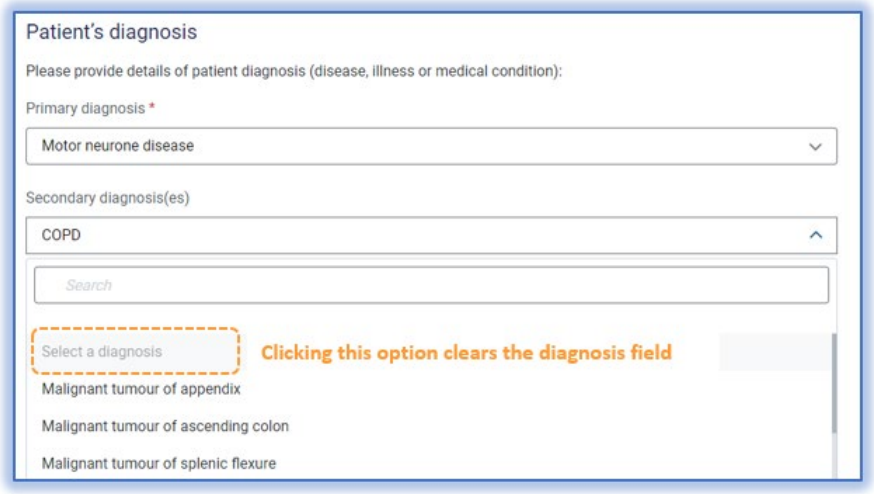
You may have noticed that a patient Episode being left open for a short period after the Board receives a *Practitioner Administration Form* or a *Notification of Death Form*. This is done to enable submission of an *Authorised Disposal Form* or an *Administering Practitioner Disposal Form* (if required). If you are the Administering Practitioner, and there is no remaining substance to dispose of, you can add a Note to the episode and the Board Secretariat Unit will then close the episode as soon as practicable.

User Tip – Searching for a diagnosis in VAD-IMS

The SNOMED codeset is used in VAD-IMS (as it is in other medical practice software applications). Most often, typing in the name of the condition will give you the right result in the dropdown list. If you are having issues however, here are a few suggestions that should help:

- Try a different common variation or spelling of the diagnosis
- Avoid using "joining terms" such as *"…of the…"* or hyphens
- Choose an option from the dropdown before fully typing out the term e.g. typing *"metastatic pancr"* gives more options than *"metastatic pancreatic cancer"*

Tip: you can clear the diagnosis field by clicking *"Select a diagnosis"* in the dropdown



Useful Links

The Act: www.legislation.wa.gov.au Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019

The Act Explanatory Material (as tabled): Parliament tabled paper 3625 (Feb 2020)

The Board: https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddyingboard

- Board membership, functions and processes
- VAD-IMS user support materials
- Contact details
  Email: VADBoard@health.wa.gov.au
  Fax: 08 9222 0399

Department of Health resources:
https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/Voluntary-assisted-dying

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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