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Title: Advance Care Planning in terminally ill and frail older persons
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Abstract: Purpose: Advance care planning (ACP) - the process by which patients establish goals and preferences for future care - is encouraged to improve the quality of end-of-life care. This study wants to get insight into the views of older persons, as most literature on ACP concerns younger cancer patients. Methods: Thirty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in older patients with limited prognosis recruited from a hospital, two home care services and three nursing homes in Flanders (Belgium). These interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Results: The majority was willing to talk about death and dying. However, in some elderly non-acceptance of their nearing death made ACP conversations impossible. Most of the older persons wanted to plan those issues of end-of-life care related to personal experiences and fears. They were less interested in planning situations being outside of their power of imagination. Other factors determining if patients proceed to ACP were trust in family-members and/or physician and the need for control. Conclusions: Before engaging in ACP conversations, physicians should explore the patient's acceptance status. If patients deal with their poor prognosis by not facing the reality of their situation, ACP conversations may be harmful. Also the previous experiences and fears concerning death and dying, the trust and the need for control should be checked. Otherwise, the care plan may not reflect patient's true wishes and risks not to ensure good quality end-of-life care.

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