Discussing Dying

- Discussing prognosis is an ethical responsibility; it opens the gateway to more appropriate goals of care and treatment.
- Identify and address any reluctance you have in engaging in end of life conversations.
- Acknowledge medical uncertainty, but do not let this be a reason to avoid discussion about dying.
- Be open and honest.
- Avoid code words or euphemisms.
- Use clear language without being crudely explicit, and address fears.
- Involve family members where possible, but try to avoid collusion or families knowing more than the patient.

- Be prepared for emotional distress.
- Respect the wishes of those who do not want to talk about dying.
- Develop a repertoire of questions which help patients to consider recent trends and think about the future:

  'How do you think things have been going these past few months?'

  'Given all that's been happening to you, I wonder if we might think ahead a bit?'.

- Introduce the idea of an anticipatory care plan if appropriate.
- Document the conversation and inform other team members about what has been said.

Please visit **www.sad.scot.nhs.uk** to watch a short animated film on this topic and for other educational resources on death, dying and bereavement for health and social care professionals.

www.sad.scot.nhs.uk   supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk   @NES_Bereavement