

Prevalence of Advance Care Directives in Australian health and residential aged care services:

Site report for ABC Hospital 2018

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Further information regarding this report can be obtained by contacting the Advance Care Planning Program Director at Advance Care Planning Australia on phone +61 3 9496 5660 or email acpa@austin.org.au.

A copy of the final report is available at advancecareplanning.org.au

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Disclaimer:

This report provides national advance care planning prevalence data collected in 2018. The recommendations, ideas or techniques in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Department of Health.

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Introduction

This report provides ABC Hospital with the results of its participation in the Prevalence of Advance Care Directives in Australian health and residential aged care services study. It also provides an analysis of how the results of ABC Hospital compare with those of other participating organisations across Australia.

This project is an initiative of Advance Care Planning Australia (ACPA) and is funded by the Australian Government. A copy of the final report is available on the advancecareplanning.org.au website.

The Prevalence of Advance Care Directives in Australian health and residential aged care services study provides important data and information regarding the uptake of Advance Care Directives across jurisdictions, sectors, medical conditions and services. These findings have implications for policy makers, stakeholder organisations, service providers and the Australian community. The ongoing participation and commitment of service providers to collect this national dataset is essential.

Overview of advance care planning and Advance Care Directive documentation in Australia

Advance care planning is a process of planning for future health and personal care, whereby the person's values and preferences are made known. Ideally, advance care planning results in the completion of an Advance Care Directive, defined as a written document recognised by common law or specific legislation that is completed and signed by a competent adult. Advance Care Directives are an important part of advance care planning because they provide information and support for substitute decision-makers, clinicians and caregivers who may need to consider and advocate for the person's expressed preferences at a time when the person is unable to make or communicate their decisions.

Advance care planning documentation varies across Australia. Although all Australian states and territories recognise Advance Care Directives under either state legislation (statutory advance care directive) or common law/policy (non-statutory advance care directive), navigating available documents is complex. Whilst early statutory Advance Care Directives tended to focus on the person's instructions for future treatments for a specific medical condition or to appoint a substitute decision-maker, increasingly, statutory Advance Care Directives also include values and goals elements. Non-statutory documents have generally focused more broadly on a person's values, beliefs, and goals for future care, but often also include specific instructions regarding treatment. Thus, the distinction between the types of documents is not clear in many

jurisdictions. Statutory directives expressing preferences for care are not currently available in New South Wales and Tasmania, and so only non-statutory directives can be completed in these jurisdictions. Non-statutory Advance Care Directives are used in other jurisdictions, and whilst the legal standing of these documents has only been tested in New South Wales, it is generally thought courts would recognise preferences outlined in non-statutory directives.

Other advance care planning documentation includes unstructured documentation completed by the person, or documentation completed on behalf of a person that clearly outlines the person's preferences, values, goals and/or beliefs regarding future health care. However, the utility of this material is limited.

Prevalence of Advance Care Directives in Australian health and residential aged care services study

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence and characteristics of Advance Care Directives for older people at the point of care in Australian general practices, hospitals and residential aged care services. This was achieved through conducting a comprehensive audit of 720 health records of individuals aged 65 years or more in 8 general practices, 8 hospitals, and 8 residential aged care facilities around Australia.

For the purposes of the study, we focused on describing the prevalence of statutory and non-statutory Advance Care Directives, which were defined as any of the following three types of documents: 1. Statutory Advance Care Directive: preferences for care; 2. Statutory Advance Care Directive: substitute decision-maker; or 3. Non-statutory Advance Care Directive. The overall prevalence rate was operationalised as the presence of at least one Advance Care Directive in a person's health record. The prevalence of other advance care planning documentation (e.g., discussion notes, letters) was captured but not included in the overall prevalence as it is not legally binding and may not inform healthcare decision-making.

This report provides ABC Hospital with results regarding the prevalence of Advance Care Directives. It also compares the findings from ABC Hospital with those of all participating hospitals ($n = 8$) and all participating sites ($n = 24$). Separate prevalence rates are provided for the individual statutory and non-statutory Advance Care Directives.

Findings

Prevalence of Advance Care Directives

A total of 30 health records were audited at ABC Hospital (15 females, mean age 79.7 ± 8.7 years). The overall prevalence of having at least one statutory or non-statutory Advance Care Directive in the audited records was **16.7%**. By comparison, the average prevalence rate across all participating hospitals was **15.7%**. The average prevalence across all 24 participating sites was **30.0%**.

A pictorial representation of how ABC Hospital compares with all participating hospitals and sites from around Australia is presented in Figure 1.

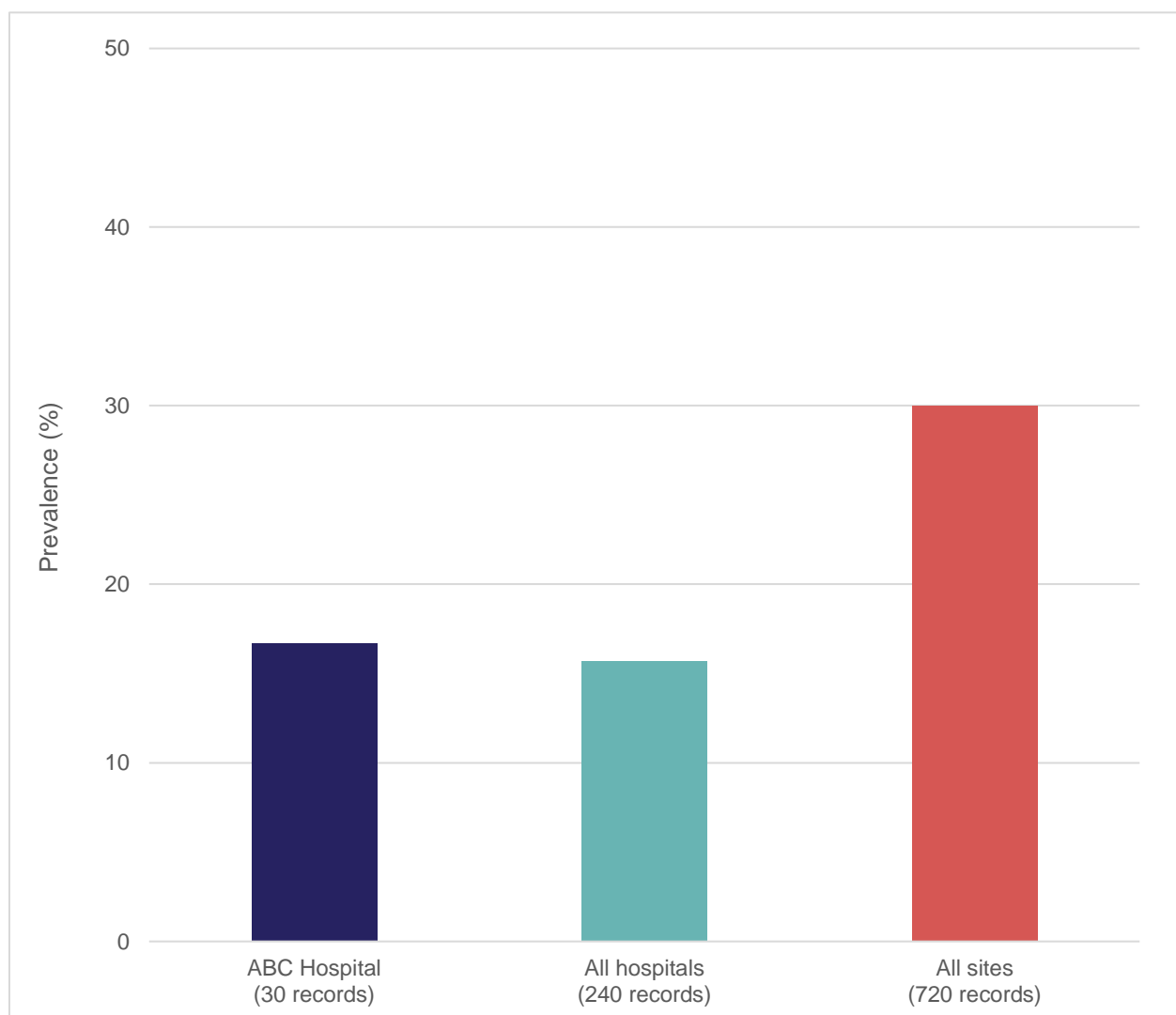


Figure 1 Prevalence of having at least one Advance Care Directive on file at ABC Hospital compared with all hospitals ($n = 8$) and all study sites ($n = 24$).

The position of ABC Hospital in relation to all participating sites for prevalence of Advance Care Directives is presented in Figure 2.

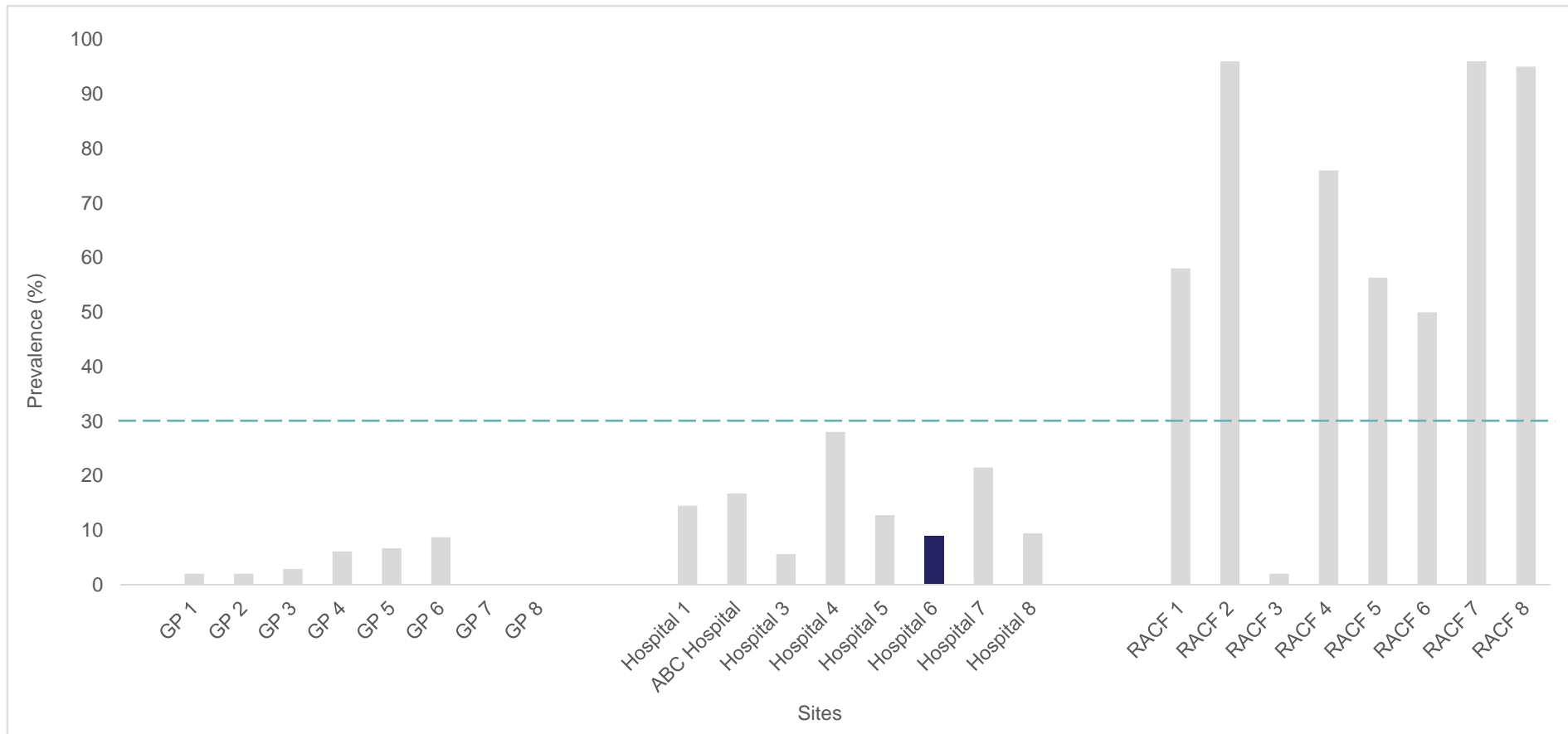


Figure 2 Prevalence of Advance Care Directives at ABC Hospital in relation to all other study sites ($n = 24$). Note: ABC Hospital is represented by the purple bar; the average prevalence in the total sample (30.0%) is represented by the green dotted line.

Prevalence of individual types of Advance Care Directives

Rates of the individual types of Advance Care Directives at ABC Hospital were as follows:

- Statutory Advance Care Directives: preferences for care: 2.6%
- Statutory advance care directives – appointing a substitute decision-maker: 10.0%
- Non-statutory advance care directives: 10.0%

A pictorial representation of how ABC Hospital compares with all participating hospitals and sites for the individual types of Advance Care Directives is presented in Figure 3.

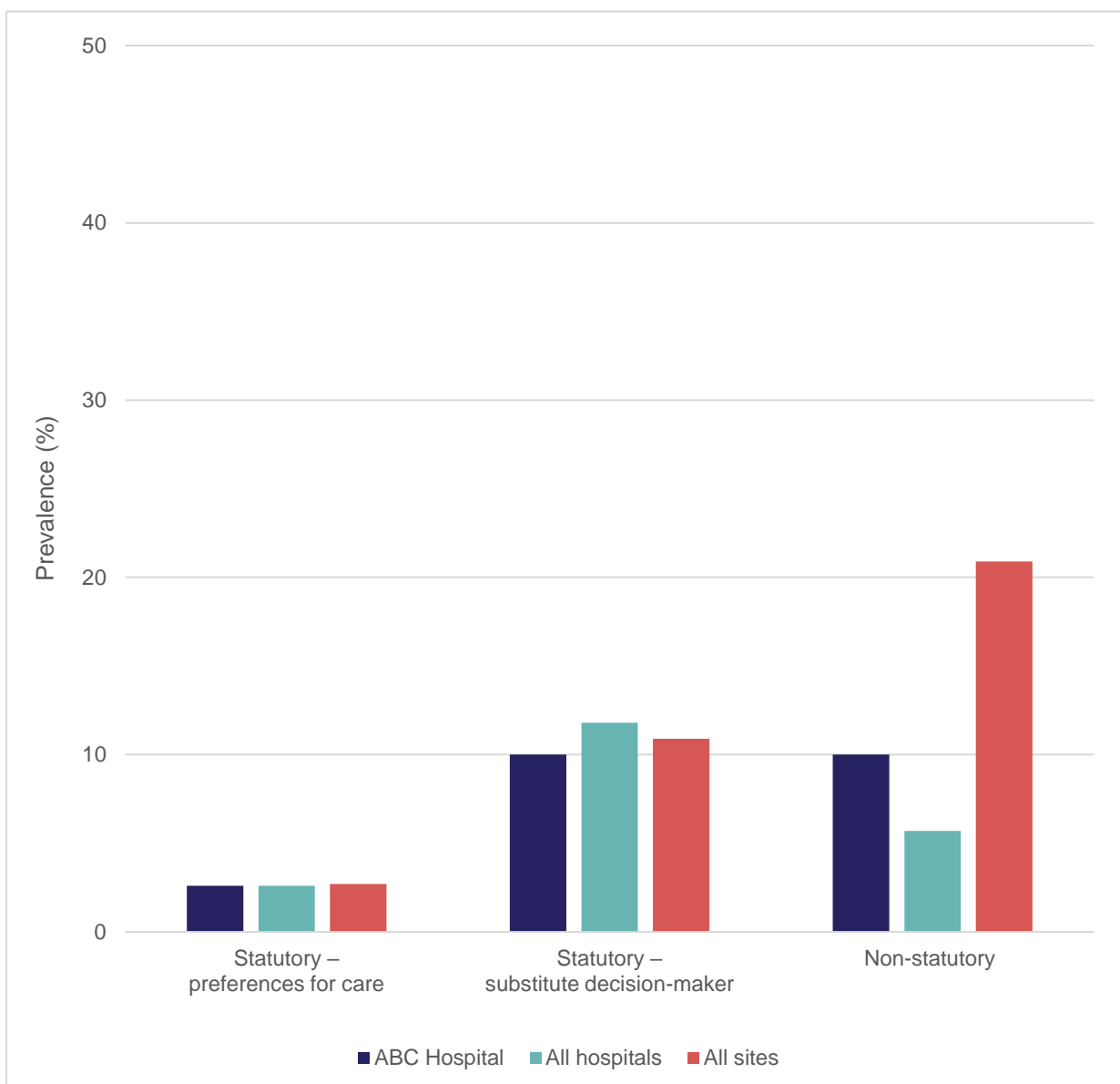


Figure 3 Prevalence of individual types of Advance Care Directives at ABC Hospital compared with all hospitals ($n = 8$) and all study sites ($n = 24$).

Prevalence of other advance care planning documentation

Other advance care planning was not included in the overall prevalence rate of Advance Care Directives because of its variable quality and the lack of clarity regarding whether the documentation was completed by the person or on behalf of a non-competent person. However, the prevalence of this other documentation is reported here for completeness.

The prevalence of other advance care planning documentation in health records at ABC Hospital was 13.3%. By comparison, the average prevalence rate of other advance care planning documentation across all participating hospitals was 27.5%, and the average prevalence across all 24 participating sites was 21.6%. A pictorial representation of how ABC Hospital compares with other participating hospitals and sites from around Australia is presented in Figure 4.

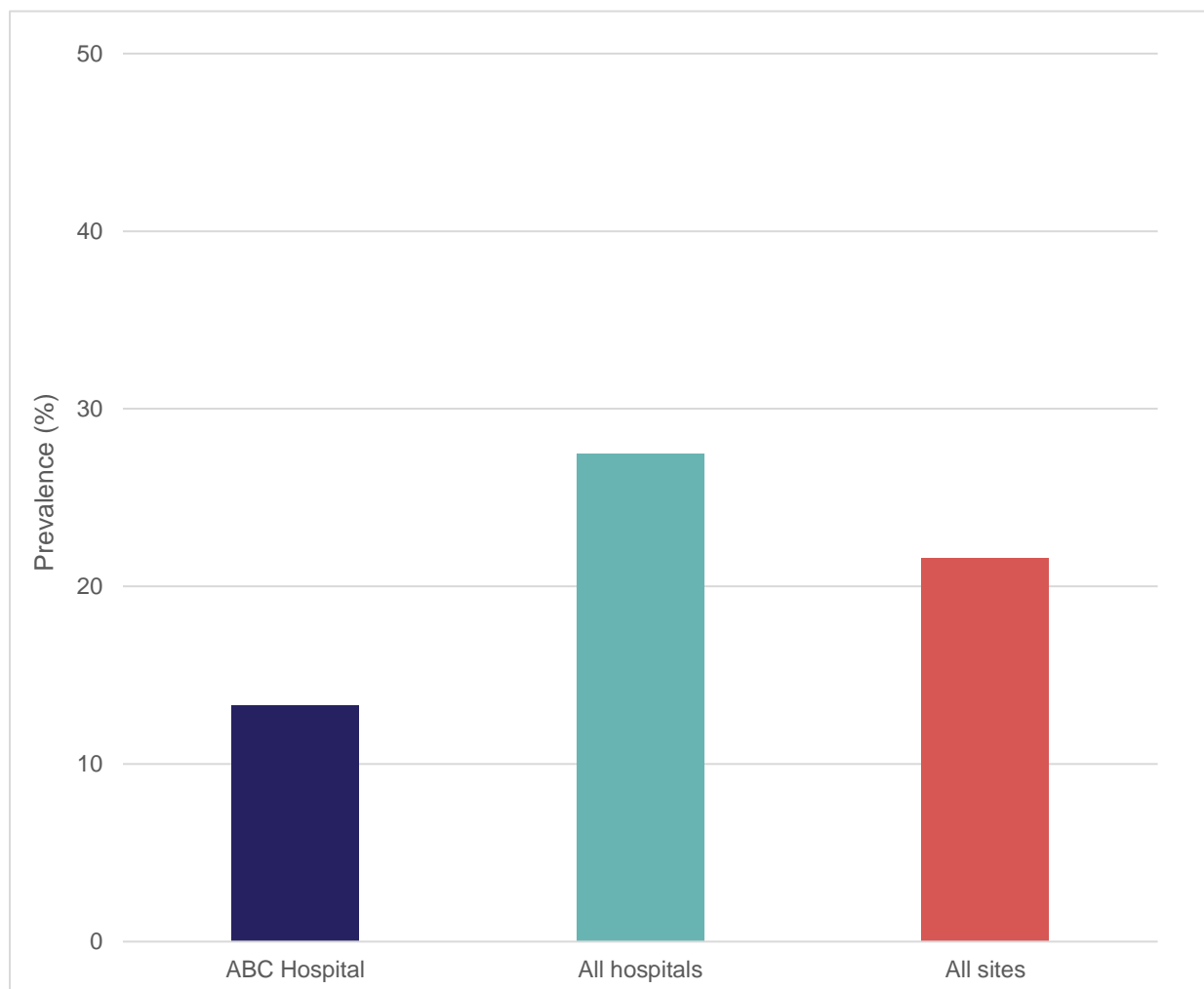


Figure 4 Prevalence of other advance care planning documentation at ABC Hospital compared with all hospitals ($n = 8$) and all study sites ($n = 24$).

Conclusion

This study represents the most comprehensive evidence to date on the prevalence of Advance Care Directives in Australian general practice, hospital and residential aged care services. The overall findings indicated that approximately 30% of older Australians accessing health services had at least one advance care directive documented in their health record, but as shown in Figure 3, the majority of these were non-statutory Advance Care Directives. The study also found that around 20% of people had some form of other advance care planning documentation (Figure 4). Taken together, these findings suggest that almost 50% of people included in the audit had engaged with advance care planning in some way. This is an encouraging result, and demonstrates that efforts to promote advance care planning in the Australian population are having a positive and tangible impact. However, only a small proportion of the identified documentation were statutory Advance Care Directives. As statutory directives are the only legally binding type of advance care planning documentation, promoting the use of these documents requires a systems approach to ensure continuation of quality improvement.

The results of this study provide valuable baseline prevalence rates against which to evaluate future initiatives aimed at increasing completion rates of Advance Care Directives at ABC Hospital. The prevalence of Advance Care Directives at ABC Hospital was lower than the overall average but slightly higher than the average prevalence rate in all participating hospitals. Rates of both forms of statutory Advance Care Directives were comparable to average rates in all participating hospitals and all participating sites.

Recommendations

It is recommended that these results are presented to your relevant clinical governance/quality committee for discussion and action. Strategies and actions to improve advance care planning prevalence should focus on systems, policy, clinical leadership, consumer engagement, workforce education and resources, implementation of readily available advance care planning resources at www.advancecareplanning.org.au or your local state or territory Department of Health.

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