

Arthur's keen to get them talking about planning for end-of-life care

Arthur Te Anini has a chronic illness he knows will limit his life. It's a sobering thought, but the ex army man understands that thinking about and planning for his future and end-of-life care makes everything much less scary.

So, Arthur (Ngāti Whanaunga) has completed an advance care plan that tells his whānau and health care team what's important to him and the end-of-life care he'd like.

He has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD – an umbrella term for emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma.

“Having been in the army, the idea of an advance care plan appealed to me. I could see it straight away. It presents clear information, not just for me, but for my family and medical team too.

“For example, if I reach the stage where I can't speak and prolonging my life would be futile, I don't want to be kept alive by having a feeding tube or being hooked up to machines. My advance care plan was an opportunity to say that to my medical team, while I could.”

Arthur's plan also says that if he is unable to speak for himself it's important to him that he is “kept presentable – clean shaven, fingernails cut and wearing clean clothes. Where I am isn't important to me, but I'd like to hear familiar voices singing and talking”.

Wednesday 5 April is Conversations that Count Day, which encourages people to think about, talk about and plan for their future and end-of-life care. The theme for this year is 'Get them talking'.

Dr Barry Snow, clinical lead of the National Advance Care Planning Cooperative, says recording what is important to you and gives your life meaning might include people and pets, your values and the ways you would like those caring for you to look after your spiritual, cultural and emotional needs.

“Having an advance care plan is particularly important if you become too unwell to tell your loved ones and health care team what you want yourself.

“For example, what medical treatment would you want if you had a life-threatening illness? Would you want to be kept comfortable with your pain controlled, or for your life to be prolonged with active life-support medical treatments?”

Dr Snow says many people see having an advance care plan as an important gift as it can relieve loved ones of the burden of having to make decisions on their behalf.

Arthur Te Anini agrees. “It’s a huge relief to have done my advance care plan and to know that my whānau and my health care team are aware of it. I can still change it at any time, but it means I am free to enjoy my life.”

There are lots of free resources to help Kiwis think about and prepare their advance care plan at <http://www.advancecareplanning.org.nz>.

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For further information or if you would like to interview Arthur Te Anini or Dr Barry Snow, contact Dylan Moran on 04 913 1745, 021 813 591, dylan.moran@hqsc.govt.nz.