



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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Immediate release.

# **NEW RESEARCH ON END-OF-LIFE PLANNING SHOWS IRISH PATIENTS WELL ABLE TO THINK AHEAD**

The Irish Hospice Foundation and the Forum on End of Life in Ireland have today (21<sup>st</sup> May) welcomed the publication in The Irish Medical Journal (IMJ) this month of a General Practice based study which found a strongly positive response by patients to a request to consider and record their detailed preferences regarding their own end-of-life care.

A scientific paper in the peer reviewed journal entitled ‘Are We Ready to “Think Ahead”? Acceptability Study Using an Innovative End of Life Planning Tool’ captures the results of a study by Dr Brendan O’Shea (Lecturer in General Practice at Trinity College) and his Colleagues on the TCD HSE GP Training Scheme. The study involved 100 clinically stable patients in five GP Training Practices attending their GP for routine care. Participants were provided with a “Think Ahead” form and their experience of filling out the form was later explored by telephone survey.

Think Ahead is a citizen-led advance planning tool which has been developed by the National Council of the Forum on End of Life in Ireland – an initiative of the Irish Hospice Foundation. It guides people in looking at and recording all aspects of end of life: legal, economic, healthcare preferences and wishes for organ donation and funeral arrangements. The study team was supported by the Forum on End of Life in Ireland and the Irish Hospice Foundation.

Key results included:

- 63% reported “no difficulty” completing the form
- 76% completed all or part of the form
- 74% indicated they did not find completing the form to cause upset
- 87% felt that the Think Ahead document should be made more widely available
- 68% indicated they felt “Think Ahead” would be of general interest
- 83% had discussions on end-of-life planning with family members after reading Think Ahead

Dr O’Shea commented: “Our study has found that the GP surgery is a good location to introduce end-of-life conversations, and a planning tool such as Think Ahead is invaluable. Our study found high levels of acceptability and positive experience for most patients. Most had no difficulty in

completing the form, were not upset by it and felt it should be more widely available. The form itself was effective in encouraging discussions on end-of-life issues with family.”

Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness, Chairperson of the National Council, commented: “Dr O’Shea’s research shows a very positive response from the public to the notion of planning ahead. End-of-life discussions can be uncomfortable for many of us but they are essential on a societal as well as a personal level. Dr O’Shea’s research has been vital in informing the future development of Think Ahead.”

Sharon Foley, CEO of the Irish Hospice Foundation, stated: “Think Ahead was developed following a year-long public consultation process where people said they wanted a tool of this kind. It is continually being tested to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the public.”

The Think Ahead form provides for an Advance Healthcare Directive. While Advance Healthcare Directives are recognised in common law, a provision to legislate for Advance Healthcare Directives is to be incorporated into the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Bill 2013.

Copies of Think Ahead are available from the Irish Hospice Foundation (01-679 3188) or can be downloaded from [www.thinkahead.ie](http://www.thinkahead.ie)

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