

Mobile phones could carry end-of-life care wishes

April 10 2013, by Carley Tonoli



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Mobile phones should be used to express and store our end-of-life medical care preferences, experts say.

Advance care directives (ACDs) are legal documents that allow people to detail the quality of life they are prepared to accept when in a coma,

terminally ill, or no longer able to speak for themselves.

But few Australians have ACDs and those who do rarely carry them, meaning clinicians are unable to access the patient's wishes in life threatening medical situations.

Ms Margaret Brown, research fellow at the University of South Australia's Hawke Research Institute, said mobile phones may provide an answer.

"The key benefit would be, that it is something you have on you or close to you, and its not stored in a shoe box under the bed where nobody knows its there," Ms Brown said.

A further potential benefit of using mobile phones in the creation of these ACDs is that it may allow the documents to be more readily altered.

"The important thing about any sort of electronic record, is that it must be on the person rather than on the computer because if the person decides they want to make a change to their direction, to their wishes, reappoint somebody because there has been a conflict in the family, they have to be able to change it," Ms Brown said.

Professor Kenneth Hillman, Professor of [Intensive Care](#), University of [New South Wales](#) said storing and creating ACDs on mobile phones made a lot of sense.

"It is not just having your wishes recorded, it is making sure that your wishes are conveyed to everyone. It is important that the app or information is available to your [general practitioner](#) and family," Professor Hillman said

"For younger people it might even be able to be tied up with, and financially supported by, the big move to make [Australians](#) aware of the possibilities of their organs being donated, so the two things could go hand in hand."

But the idea is still in early stages, with many potential hurdles to overcome.

"Many of the people we are talking about are in their 70s, 80s, and 90s now, and they may not have ready access to [mobile phone](#) technologies," Professor Hillman said.

Professor Colleen Cartwright, Foundation Professor of Aged Services and Director of the ASLaRC Aged Services Unit, Southern Cross University, echoed this view and said a lack of uniformity in state laws, the need for the documents to be witnessed, and the potential privacy considerations would all need to be addressed before the technology could be put to use.

"How do you make sure it is not the [person's] children who alter it rather than the person themselves; how are you going to provide the security?" Professor Cartwright said.

Ms Brown also acknowledged these hurdles but said the idea warranted further investigation.

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Citation: Mobile phones could carry end-of-life care wishes (2013, April 10) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-04-mobile-end-of-life.html>

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