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# Northern Ontario Nugget

## LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

- 3 out of 5 Canadian primary care physicians do not feel well prepared to help people in need of palliative care (Canadian Institute for Health Information [CIHI], 2019).

**3/5** Primary Care Physicians feel unprepared to help the dying

- Canadians with cancer are 3 times more likely to receive palliative care than Canadians with other conditions, despite noted benefits for people with diseases like heart failure, dementia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (CIHI, 2019).
- 62% of Canadians who received palliative care did so in an acute care hospital and mostly in their last month of life.

**50 PERCENT**  
50 PERCENT of families don't know their loved one's end-of-life wishes, yet may have some very difficult decisions to make (Speak Up Fact Sheet, 2019)

**9 PERCENT** of patients have spoken to their healthcare provider about their wishes for care.

Physicians can be a part of changing these statistics - they play a pivotal role in patients' lives & deaths.

## Start the discussion early.

Most of us hope to die peacefully, able to communicate with loved ones until the very end. It doesn't always happen that way. Making your wishes known now helps those who care about you make the right decisions if you can't speak for yourself. (Speak Up Canada, 2019).

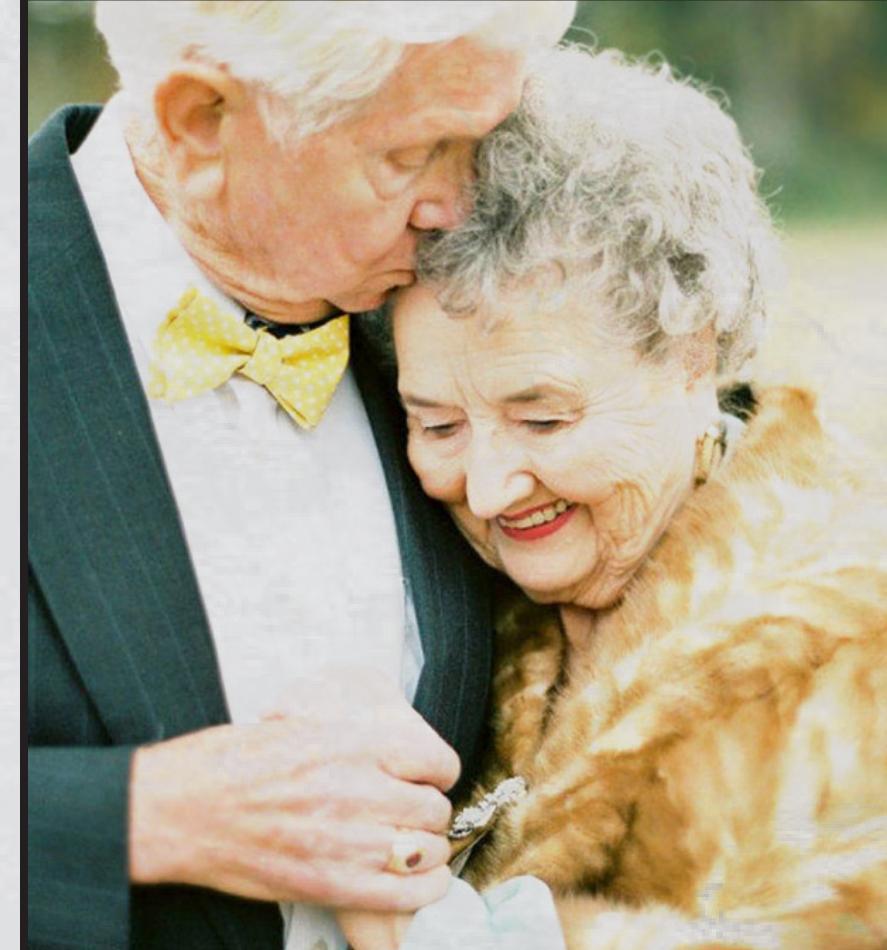
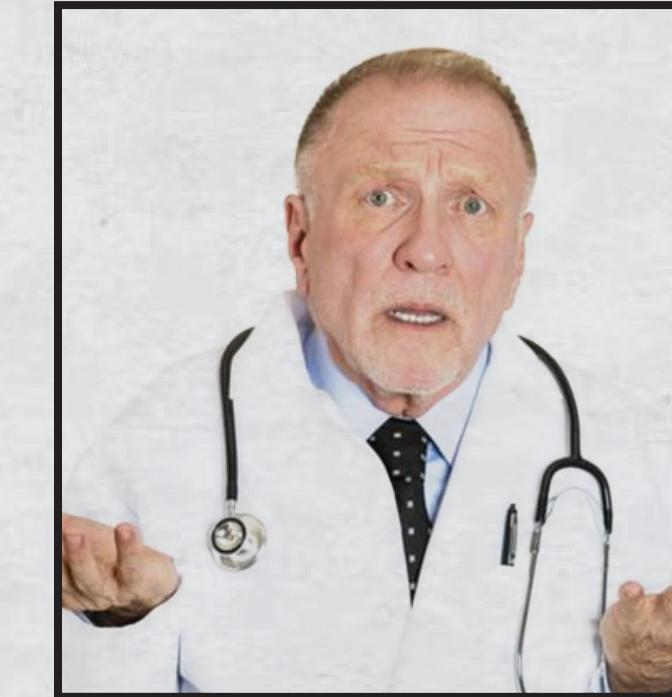
It's about conversations.

It's about decisions.

It's how we care for our patients, ourselves, and our loved ones.

**3X**

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Sandy and Rick's children arranged for professional photography as part of the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party organized for them.

I expect him to die so soon. My husband became ill and couldn't communicate his wishes for care. He had struggled with COPD for years and we never really knew that it was terminal. My husband didn't like talking about dying and I feel he let me down by not opening up. I guess I let him down too, because I didn't know how to talk about some of the things that we needed to discuss."

## Sandy's Story: "Our doctor could have prevented so much pain and suffering"

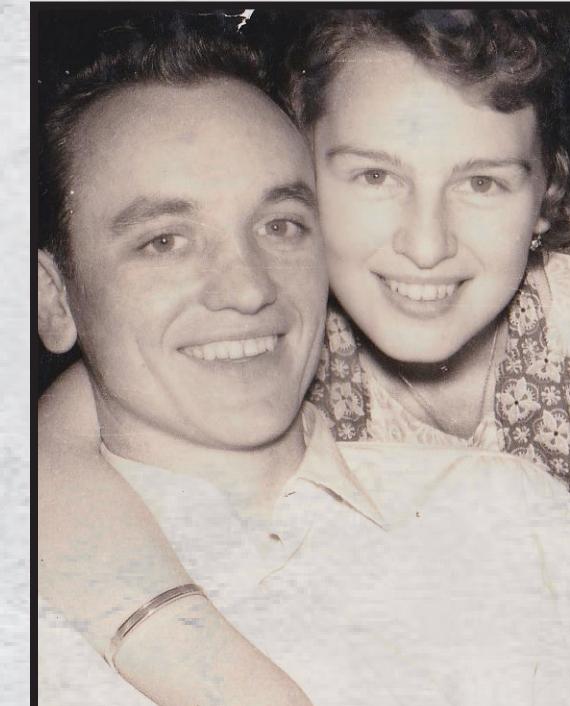
Sandy and Rick Anderson were married happily for 47 years. Their three children, Robert, Sue, and Anthony recently threw them an anniversary party, complete with portraits. Sandy worked her whole life as a librarian, while Rick spent his early years as a general labourer but eventually got his ticket in carpentry. They loved taking walks along the beaches of the Great Lakes, and showering their children and 8 grandchildren with love and food. Rick died in the spring of last year. Despite how close they were, Sandy wishes things would have gone better, "I didn't

Sandy felt that Rick's physician could have prevented a lot of pain and suffering. "I wish our doctor would have started this discussion when my husband was first diagnosed with COPD. I think this would have opened the discussion for us to share our personal & healthcare wishes with each other. I felt so overwhelmed when trying to make decisions for him during his final days. It would have been nice closure if things had been different in the end. I can never get that time back."

Dr. Compassion, a local Palliative Physician, explains how is easy it is to provide this care, "It's as simple as being honest. Honest with ourselves and our patients. If we only ever let ourselves celebrate a patient who beats the odds, we're stacking the cards against us, and against our patient outcomes.

*"Why can't we celebrate good deaths?"*

When a patient feels their wishes were met for their final weeks, that's a good death. Why can't we celebrate that? That could mean fighting until the end, but maybe it's having all of their symptoms managed so that they're comfortable. We need to ask our patients what they want."



Sandy & Rick Anderson, at their engagement in 1966.

**Lisa Chandler**

"True honesty is better than false hope."  
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Learn more and get assistance by connecting with our Nurse Coordinators



**Alisha Kreutzweiser**

"Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters"  
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