What it is: A care pathway is a tool which outlines what is recognised as best practice for a certain disease or condition with an expected course. A care pathway guides and monitors a person’s journey of best practice care between health professionals and across sectors. End-of-life care pathways can help prompt terminal care and encourage discussion with the person and their family.

Why it matters: Care pathways aim to:
• prompt and guide clinical decisions
• improve the timeliness of the start of care
• improve the consistency of care between different professionals
• reduce the risk of errors
• prevent unnecessary emergency treatments
• streamline care and therefore may reduce costs
• give confidence that the right care is being provided.

For long-term or chronic conditions, care pathways can guide healthcare professionals on when and/or how to:
• start treatment
• follow-up
• monitor change
• check for and monitor complications
• refer to other health professionals.

What I need to know: Care pathways differ from care plans. Care plans are based on the needs and preferences of an individual, and on the services available. Advance Care Directives should be included in planning.

Understanding the most common plans and pathways, and factors that influence these transitions can help medical practitioners and others to inform and advise older Australians who are:
• about to start using aged care services
• already using the aged care services.
Name:

My reflections:

How do care pathways and care plans differ?

When was the last time I used a care pathway for an older person, and how did this improve care?

My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice Tip Sheets:
Advance Care Planning
Case Conferences
Continuity of Care

References used to develop this sheet are available at www.palliaged.com.au