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## News / Publications NEWS RELEASES

November 17, 2003

### Plan Ahead: Decide for yourself - today and tomorrow

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**Vancouver, BC** - Representation agreements are underutilized in BC. However, all British Columbians actively planning for the future should consider writing and registering a Representation Agreement. The agreement records an individual's wishes for health care in the event they become unable to make and communicate decisions independently.

Patients are encouraged to speak to their physician about writing a representation agreement. Representation agreements allow people to appoint one or more individuals whom they trust, to manage their affairs according to the advance directives set out in the representation agreement.

Having a legal, documented future care plan assures people their wishes are known and will be honoured, and that they remain in charge of the choices affecting their own life.

It eases the burden on family members who might otherwise have to make decisions for someone else, and provides health care workers with treatment guidelines and a chosen legal representative. "Next of kin consent" and "living wills" fulfill a similar role; however, a representation agreement is the only legally binding future care consent plan.

The Representation Agreement Act came into effect on February 28, 2000. Prior to this, British Columbians only could use the Enduring Power of Attorney Act to record their desires for handling financial and legal matters.

"Representation agreements are not necessary in every circumstance, but everyone should consider whether a future care plan is appropriate for their own situation," says Dr Heidi Oetter, chair of the BC Medical Association's Council on Health Promotion.

Registering representation agreements and enduring power of attorney agreements is voluntary, but it is strongly advised. Keep a copy of your representation agreement at home and provide a copy to your family doctor and representative(s). Contact the [Representation Agreement Resource Centre](#) for information on writing a representation agreement and registering your agreement on the [Nidus registry](#). Nidus is currently the only agreement registry service. It is available online 24 hours a day.

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The BCMA represents the interests of all physicians across the province and is an advocate for excellence in patient care with the provincial and federal governments who are the primary sources of healthcare funding. The Association supports various initiatives related to health promotion, physician relations with the community, develops healthcare policy and negotiates compensation for physicians with the provincial government. More information on the BCMA can be found at <http://www.bcma.org/>.

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