



## SUMMARY OF THE MEDICAL AID IN DYING PROCESS

### For Empowered Endings Medical Group Patients

The Empowered Endings Medical Group team is honored to guide and support you through this dynamic and sacred time. Our process is designed to ensure you and your loved ones' dignity, comfort and peace of mind.

You have indicated a desire to obtain a prescription for life-ending medication. Supporting patients who qualify for Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) is an area of medical specialization in which we are uniquely experienced. We understand that you and your loved ones may have questions or concerns about the choice to pursue MAID and its impact. We have a team of expert guides, including physicians and counselors, who are available throughout the process to ensure that you and your loved ones feel heard, held and whole in your journey.

To qualify for Medical Aid in Dying, according to the California End of Life Option Act of 2016, one must:

- be a current resident of California who is 18 years of age or older
- be competent to make decisions for yourself
- have a terminal illness with a prognosis of six months or less
- have filled out and signed a Written Request form that is witnessed by two people
- make two face-to-face verbal requests for life-ending medication to your Attending Physician, separated by at least 48 hours
- have a Consulting Physician evaluate you, fill out and sign a form confirming that he or she believes you are mentally competent and have a terminal illness with a life expectancy of less than 6 months;
- be able to ingest the liquid medication on your own (by mouth or through a feeding tube or rectal tube)

We understand you may be experiencing a sense of urgency about this process. Whether you want to obtain the medication as quickly as possible, or just want to start the process so you're prepared, we will do everything in our power to help you exercise your legal right with as few hurdles and delays as possible.

Everyone at the Empowered Endings Medical Group is committed to providing the support you need, honoring your independence and your spirit. This is your decision. **While others may offer advice and guidance, it is ultimately and always, your decision.**

In the following pages we will cover the details of the process, and address many of the questions that come up for patients and families at this point. Some of what will be shared here may already have been discussed with you. We offer it in writing so you can refer back to it whenever you need to. We are always available to you to address additional concerns or questions.



## Once you've decided to engage with us for support through Medical Aid in Dying, what happens?

### **Step One: Patient Registration**

Contact must be made with an Empowered Endings Medical Group (EEMG) representative. If it hasn't already happened, you will be contacted by our representative who will schedule your visits with our Attending Physician and provide instructions for filling out, signing, and returning our practice intake documents, including:

- Practice Agreement
- Privacy/HIPAA documents
- Consent to Receive and Share Medical Information for medical purposes
- Patient Information Form
- Written Request Form for Aid in Dying prescription
- Proposal for Care

### **Step Two: Completing EEMG Registration and MAID Paperwork**

Documents provided by Empowered Endings Medical Group staff must be completed. You may receive the documents on our website, in person, by email, by fax or by US mail. Once completed, the documents should be emailed to [info@empoweredendings.com](mailto:info@empoweredendings.com), faxed to 858-281-4977, or mailed to: Empowered Endings Medical Group, 4840 Tarantella Lane, San Diego, CA 92130.

With the exception of the Written Request Form, all forms can be filled out and signed by either the patient or by the patient's Health Care Agent (Medical Power of Attorney for Healthcare). The Written Request Form must be signed by the patient and witnessed by two other people, only one of whom may be a relative of the patient by blood, marriage or adoption or a beneficiary of the patient's estate. Neither the Attending nor the Consulting Physician may serve as a witness. Most representatives of hospice agencies, home care agencies, residential care facilities and nursing homes will not be allowed by their employer to serve as a witness, though they are not prohibited by law from doing so.

### **Step Three: First Request with EEMG Attending Physician**

A first visit with an Empowered Endings Medical Group Attending Physician will occur. One of our staff will contact you to schedule the first visit with your Attending Physician.

### **Step Four: Psychospiritual Support**

If requested, you will receive a call or visit from an Empowered Endings Medical Group Counselor/Guide to support any emotional, psychological or spiritual challenges you are experiencing. Common areas of exploration include, but are not limited to: facilitating communication with loved ones about the Medical Aid in Dying process and choice to pursue it; reconciling spiritual, religious, social, emotional, psychological, and moral concerns within and/or with others; understanding the potential impact of Medical Aid in Dying on loved ones and their bereavement journey; discernment regarding the thresholds for and timing of taking the medication; considering rituals and experiences at the time of the intended ingestion. This support may be engaged at any time throughout your care with Empowered Endings Medical Group.



### **Step Five: Engaging a Consulting Physician**

A Consulting Physician, independent from Empowered Endings Medical Group, must be identified. A Consulting Physician must be identified and a consultation scheduled. If one of the Empowered Endings Medical Group physicians is the Attending Physician, our staff will contact your current or recent physicians and try to get their consent to be the Consulting Physician. If they agree, we will provide them with the necessary form and ensure they know how to complete and return it to us properly. We will follow up as needed to ensure the form is completed and returned in a timely fashion. We will not influence them in any way; we will merely facilitate getting the forms to them and from them and help them understand their role if needed.

If no known physician is able or willing to be the Consulting Physician, we will attempt to help you find an independent physician who will perform an evaluation and determine for themselves whether you qualify for MAID. In order to reduce your burden and increase efficiency, we may help coordinate your visit with the Consulting Physician, and provide them with the necessary forms ensuring they know how to complete and return the forms to us properly. This Consulting Physician assessment may take place before, between, or after the Attending Physician visits.

### **Step Six: Second Request with EEMG Attending Physician**

You will be contacted by an Empowered Endings Medical Group representative regarding a time and date for a follow-up appointment with the Attending Physician to make the second verbal request. There must be a minimum of 48 hours between the first and second verbal requests.

### **Step Seven: Requesting the MAID Prescription**

After A) the two verbal requests have been made to the Attending Physician and they have determined that you qualify, B) the Consulting Physician Form is completed and returned to our office, and C) the Written Request Form is completed and returned to our office, the prescription for the Aid in Dying medication can be submitted to the pharmacy. The prescription will not be submitted to the pharmacy until you contact our office and request that it be submitted.

Once the prescription has been submitted to the pharmacy, you may request that it be filled and delivered right away, though our strong recommendation is to leave the prescription unfilled until you are getting close to the time of ingestion. The turnaround time is approximately 24 hours for the pharmacy to fill and deliver the prescription, depending on weekends and holidays. If you anticipate you will want the prescription delivered as soon as possible after the second verbal request has been made, please advise our office of this promptly (prior to the second request visit) so we can communicate with the pharmacy in advance and do our best to accommodate your request.



### **Step Eight: Contacting the Pharmacy**

When you decide to have the prescription filled and the medication delivered, your next step is to contact pharmacist Angela Forcucci at Advance Care Pharmacy at 760-489-7077 to make arrangements for payment (they will accept a credit card or a certified check) and give instructions for delivery. If the Aid in Dying medication is going to be delivered to, or picked up by, anyone other than the patient, the pharmacy will need to receive verbal or written consent by the patient for this person to take possession of the medication.

### **Step Nine: Receiving the Prescription**

Once the prescription has been submitted to the pharmacy, we will help facilitate it when we can, but we have no further influence over the process of getting the prescription filled. All financial transactions for medications are strictly between the patient, or the patient's representative, and the pharmacy. Empowered Endings Medical Group has no control over the cost of the medication, and no portion of the payment for the medication comes to us.

If you choose to have the prescription filled and the Aid in Dying medication delivered, it must be kept in a secure location, out of reach of children or anyone who might be tempted to steal or use it. If it is lost or stolen, it cannot be replaced.

In addition to the Aid in Dying medication, you will receive two anti-nausea medications that are to be taken 45-90 minutes before ingesting the Aid in Dying medication. This typically consists of 8 mg Zofran (Ondansetron) and 20 mg Reglan (Metoclopramide.) Other options may be considered in some settings.

### **Step Ten: Ingestion Support**

If/when you decide it is time to take the medicine, please notify us. We highly recommend having experienced support at the time of ingestion, especially to relieve families of practical responsibilities and to support them in integrating the transition and loss as it occurs. If you wish to have a representative of the Empowered Endings Medical Group present at the time of ingestion, prior arrangements will need to be made. If you are unable to swallow liquids adequately, the medication can be administered through a gastric tube or a rectal tube and will be equally effective. If this is a concern, please let us know and we will discuss it in detail.

### **Step Eleven: Bereavement Support**

We understand that supporting a loved one through Medical Aid in Dying is a brave and vulnerable choice. It is a singular experience that may bring up a myriad of thoughts and emotions – some helpful and healing, others potentially painful and challenging. The Empowered Endings Foundation hosts a weekly virtual MAID Bereavement Support Group, offering connection and community in grieving and healing. Although every grief journey is unique, there are threads of commonality that unite those who share their experiences with others. The Empowered Endings Medical Group Counselors and Guides who are available throughout the Medical Aid in Dying process are also available for individual Bereavement Counseling if desired. Please contact our office for more information.



### On the day of ingestion

- You should have nothing to eat or drink for at least 6 hours prior to taking the Aid in Dying medication. This aids in the absorption of medicine and greatly reduces the chances of becoming nauseated. It is ok to have a few sips of water if necessary. Eating lightly the day prior to the ingestion is recommended.
- If taking the MAID medication by mouth or G-tube, approximately 1 hour before the Aid in Dying medication is to be taken, an 8 mg Zofran (Ondansetron) tablet and two 10 mg Reglan (Metoclopramide) tablets should be taken with small sips of water. If these are not already in the home, they will be included with the prescription. The Aid in Dying medication should be consumed no sooner than 30 minutes and no later than 2 hours of taking the Zofran and Reglan.
- Just prior to ingestion, the Aid in Dying medication, which comes in powder form, is dissolved in 2 ounces of water or apple juice.
- When ready to drink the mixture, you should sit on the bed or recliner, or wherever you choose to be for your final moments. You should not try to walk after drinking the mixture.
- All the medicine should be consumed within 2 minutes of starting it. If it takes much longer than that, you may become too sleepy to finish the entire amount.
- A spoonful of sorbet or a bite of a popsicle will help reduce the unpleasant taste and slight burning of the mouth that some people experience. This can be given just before, and just after finishing the medication. No dairy products should be given.
- After several minutes you will fall into a deep sleep. Once asleep, you will not experience any discomfort or be aware of what is going on around you, though we still encourage loved ones to provide comforting words and comforting touch.



## After death has occurred

### **Hospice Patients:**

If you are on hospice, and a representative from hospice is not present when you die, the hospice agency should be contacted and the death reported. Unless an attending physician, or a nurse being supervised by the attending physician, is present to confirm the time of death, a hospice nurse will need to be present to confirm death and assist with any additional needs, such as calling the mortuary or crematorium. There is no rush to call and have the body removed. This can, and should, be done in a time frame that is comfortable for everyone. Take the time to be with your loved one if you wish, and then make the call when you feel ready.

If an Empowered Endings Medical Group physician is present at the time of death, they will confirm the time of death and make the necessary phone calls. In this event, there is no need to have a hospice nurse come out.

### **Non-Hospice Patients:**

If you are not on hospice, it is best to have a doctor or nurse present, for clinical guidance and emotional support, as well as to confirm the time of death and report it to the mortuary or crematorium.

For patients who are NOT on hospice at the time the Aid in Dying medication is taken, it would be best for the patient or a family member to contact the chosen mortuary, crematorium or donation organization to advise them that death is likely in the next few days and confirm that they will be able to pick up the body without the medical examiner being involved, as long as there is a physician or a nurse present to confirm that death has occurred. Our office can take care of this step if requested.

### **What is the medication?**

#### **DDMAPh**

This is a combination of Digoxin, Diazepam, Morphine, Amitriptyline and Phenobarbital. The DDMAPh comes in powder form. All of the medications are already combined by the pharmacy. The powder should be mixed with 2 ounces of water or apple juice and stirred until uniformly dissolved just prior to ingestion. The total volume of mixture is 2-3 ounces.

The cost of a DDMAPh prescription is approximately \$650-\$750, payable to the dispensing pharmacy. MediCal covers this cost for MediCal patients who are on hospice, and charitable support may be available through the Empowered Endings Foundation.