

Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in Victoria: a retrospective case series assessing the application process

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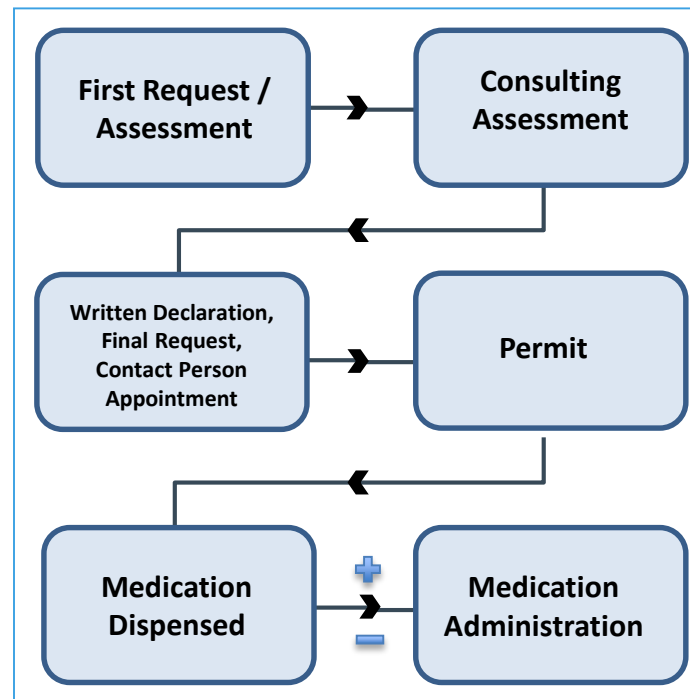


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Introduction

- Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) has been available in VIC since 19th June, 2019
- The process involves six steps:
- Victorian VAD Community of Practice (CoP)
 - online forum for VAD-trained doctors
- Victorian VAD Review Board (VADRB)
 - Monitors activity under the VAD Act
 - Issues reports on this activity



VAD Review Board report

Table 1: Requests received

Stage	Status	1 Jul-31 Dec 2020	1 Jan-30 Jun 2021	Total to date	
Eligibility	First assessment	Eligible	221	245	807
		Ineligible	12	10	29
Consulting assessment		Eligible	186	217	700
		Ineligible	4	4	12

Table 2: Medical practitioner training and involvement

Stage	Description	1 Jul-31 Dec 2020	1 Jan-30 Jun 2021	Change (%)
Online training	Medical practitioner registered for the online training program	455	511	12% ↑
Portal registration	Trained medical practitioner registered in the portal	210	234	11% ↑
Active in the portal	Trained medical practitioner involved in one or more cases as either coordinating or consulting medical practitioner	157	185	18% ↑

- 342 cases (41%) withdrawn*
 - Reasons for withdrawal recorded since Jan 2021
 - 90/103 (87%) due to death
- Time taken to complete the application process not reported:
 - For applications where a final request was made,
 - 25% progressed from first to final request within 11 days
 - 50% progressed from first to final request within 17 days
- Timing of withdrawal not reported
- Understanding the timeline of application useful in managing patient and family expectations

Safer Care Victoria, 2021

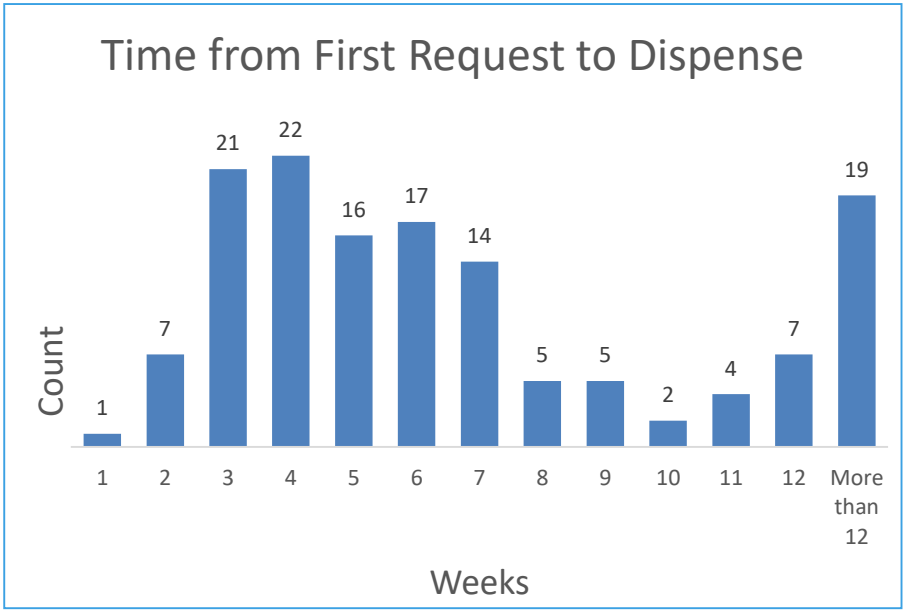
*"withdrawal" defined by VADRB as not reaching the stage of dispensing medication

Methods

- Monash University HREC Project ID: 24804, dated 19/5/2020, modified 8/10/2020
- Analysis of submitted deidentified case data from members of the Victorian VAD Community of Practice (CoP)
- Dates of completion of each stage of VAD application was recorded
- Date of withdrawal and/or death noted, including whether medication administered or not
- Time between medication dispense and administration also calculated for patients who received self-administration medication

Results – Timeliness

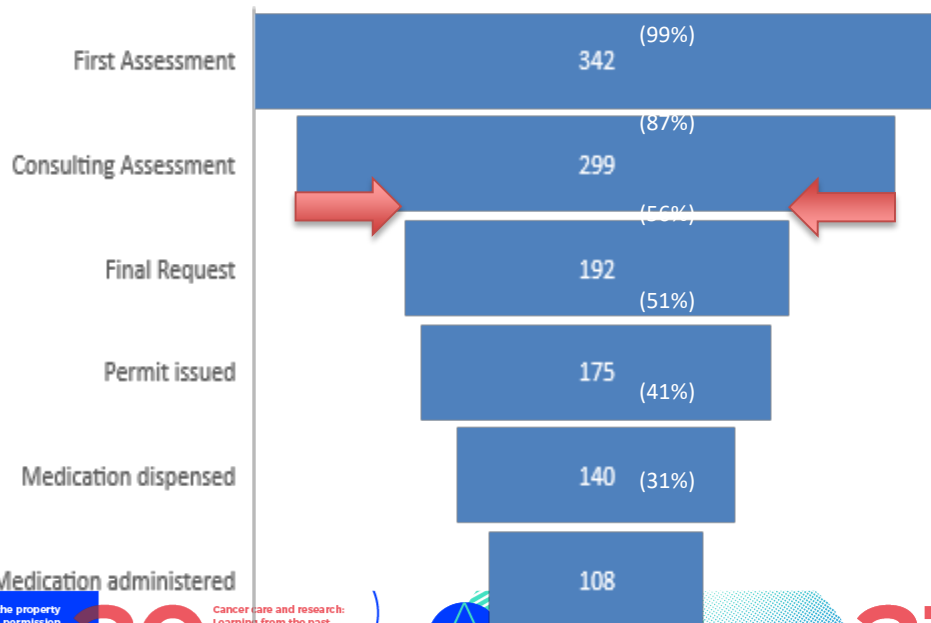
- 10 of 39 respondents (26%)
- 344 cases
- Median time from First request to receive medication:
 - 36 days (range 4-281)



Results – Withdrawals

- 114 cases (33%) withdrawn
 - 112 due to death
 - 1 for loss of capacity
 - 1 for short prognosis
- For withdrawn cases, median time to death from first request:
 - 20 days (range 2-335)
- Median time from medication dispense to administration:
 - seven days (range 0-242)

Number of patients completing the stages of VAD application



Conclusions

- VAD application takes time
 - Particularly in the context of a prognosis of less than six months
 - This needs to be taken into account when considering timing of referral
- Time taken to find a VAD-trained doctor
 - Currently not collected / calculable
- Greatest attrition occurs between Consulting Assessment and Final Request
 - Nine-day cooling off period
 - No evidence of any patient using the cooling off period to withdraw