

Arthur's helping to spread the word on advance care planning

Arthur Te Anini (Ngāti Whanaunga) is on a mission. The 67-year-old South Aucklander wants to convince his fellow Māori to start talking about future health care and end of life care.

He particularly wants Māori to see the benefits of having an advance care plan (ACP) – the process of exploring what matters to you and sharing that information with your loved ones and your health care team so treatment and care plans can support what is important to you.

Arthur has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. This is an umbrella term for emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma, usually caused by smoking, which Arthur knows will limit his life.



He was introduced to the concept of ACP when he attended a 'Better Breathing' rehabilitation programme to help him manage his symptoms, and has completed an ACP with the help of his health care team.

"I'd never heard of it, but I thought it was a great idea. I was getting worried because of my health and I thought if I keel over, the family will have to pick up the pieces and they won't know what to do.

"At that stage I didn't even have a will. I was just going with the flow. If I'd died at that point it would have been a hell of a mess to sort out.

"Having an ACP means that if I'm unable to speak for myself, my whānau and doctors are aware of my wishes and what treatment I do and don't want.

"For example, if, according to the doctors, prolonging my life would be futile, my ACP says I'd like them to just let me pass peacefully. I don't want to use up resources or to be resuscitated."

Arthur's ACP says he'd like to have close whānau with him such as his children, Tracy and Rangi. "I want people to talk about the old times and the good times. I'd like to hear familiar voices singing or talking. I've always thought that was a better way. Where I am doesn't matter to me.

"I've said in my plan that it's important to me that I'm kept nice and clean and tidy so I'm presentable when people come to see me."

Arthur says his children found it difficult at first to talk about his ACP.

“I explained to them that they might have to make decisions on my behalf, so they needed to know what was important to me. Now, they’re pleased I have it.

“Everyone who might care for me has access to my ACP – whether I’m at the doctors’ clinic or I go to hospital. If they need it, they can press a button and up it comes. But, I can still change it at any time.”

Attending Better Breathing has improved Arthur’s health so much that he is now a volunteer for the programme – and an advocate for ACP.

“Of course, talking about these things isn’t the Māori way and quite a few Māori have come to Better Breathing and said ‘we don’t do that. You don’t go against tikanga (rules)’.

“But I’m on a bit of a mission to educate Māori about this, so I just say ‘I’d be very interested to talk to you about it’.

“Quite a lot of kuia and kaumatua come to Better Breathing, so I’m able to sit down with them one-on-one and talk to them about the benefits of ACP. Some have come back and asked me questions, so I see that as a positive.

“I’m pouring ideas into them and hoping they’ll go away and korero with other Māori about it.

“I tell them it’s a huge relief to have done my ACP and to know that my whānau and doctors are aware of it. It means I’m now free to enjoy my life.”

[Watch Arthur's video here.](#)