Living Will, Living Well
Reflections on Preparing an Advance Directive

M. Dianne Godkin / John B. Dossetor, Foreword

Advance directive, n. an expression of a person’s wishes about the types of healthcare he or she would want to receive, how decisions should be made, and who should make those decisions in the event that they become incapable of communicating those decisions for themselves; a living will.

Living Will, Living Well: Reflections on Preparing an Advance Directive by clinical ethicist Dianne Godkin, explores end-of-life issues and emotions that arise when a person sets out to prepare an advance directive.

Godkin draws on a wealth of personal and professional experience to create a fictional character, Alice, who guides readers in their quest to understand the experience of preparing an advance directive. Alice’s story revolves around five central themes:

1. protecting one’s self and others;
2. facing one’s mortality with integrity and dignity;
3. talking about death with family, friends, and healthcare providers;
4. choosing an ally, someone to champion one’s wishes; and,
5. completing the necessary documents and tasks.

In addition to being a well grounded experiential guide, Living Will, Living Well includes appendices with a sample advance directive, legislative guidelines, and educational resources.

“I hope [this book] will be widely read by many types of health professionals as well as by all those over 65 years of age, even when they are in good health, and that it leads them to making good decisions. This book is not only a valuable contribution to this area of healthcare, it also has philosophical beauty.”
— From the Foreword by John B. Dossetor, OC, FRCPC, PhD

Dianne Godkin is Manager of the Centre for Clinical Ethics (a joint venture of Providence Healthcare, St. Joseph’s Health Centre, and St. Michael’s Hospital) in Toronto. She is Assistant Professor and Associate Member of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto and is a Course Director in the Masters in Health Sciences (Bioethics) program at the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics. As a clinical ethicist, one of her primary focuses is ensuring that older adults who are nearing the end of life receive care that reflects their wishes and is responsive to their needs and concerns.