

Dear South Dakotans:

On behalf of the Department of Health, it is my pleasure to recognize this very special issue of *South Dakota Medicine*.



End-of-life care, the focus of this issue, is a subject with the potential to touch each one of us on a very personal level. Whether we are caring for a loved one with a terminal illness or confronting our own mortality, end-of-life issues such as pain management, advance directives and family support are critically important.

When we find ourselves in these situations we naturally turn to our physicians for support and guidance. This special issue is dedicated to giving physicians the information and resources they need to better prepare for that difficult role. The intent is to help physicians help their patients live out their last days with dignity and compassion.

The Department of Health congratulates the South Dakota State Medical Association, the South Dakota Alliance for Advance Directives and all other partners involved on their efforts to address the difficult but important issue of end-of-life care. We are pleased to have played a part in developing this issue, and we are confident it will benefit both physicians and the patients in their care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Doneen B. Hollingsworth".

Doneen B. Hollingsworth
Secretary of Health