

# Consumers Shaping Health



News and views on health consumer issues - February 2020



## Coronavirus: a time for well-informed health consumers

The initial response of the typical Australian to reports of the rapid spread of coronavirus might well be a mixture of concern, indifference and/or impotence: the disease is a worry but it's far away and anyway what can I do to combat it?

Yet there is one step individuals can take to equip themselves in the era of coronavirus. That is to inform themselves about characteristics of the disease like its symptoms, spread and infectiousness.

What would be the point? the sceptics might ask. However, information is power, as they say. And in the case of coronavirus, knowledge should not only protect us and our society against alarming rumour but also equip us in the event of local infections.

A National Prevention Strategy consultation workshop on 'education' reminded us why good health communication that promotes health literacy matters and told us that countries that have undertaken health surveys have generally found that poor health literacy is more common than we think.

Good health communication and public health education can improve health literacy - and is all the more important in a crisis.

In the depths of the 1930s depression newly-elected US President famously said: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

Coronavirus is a disease which as of this week has had a death rate of just over 2 per cent, significantly lower than some diseases like smallpox and bird flu, but higher than polio and chicken pox. It appears to be moderately infectious but less so than measles and chickenpox. The coronavirus travels through the air from breath, talking, coughs or sneezes. The virus is contained in tiny droplets which fall to the ground within two metres. This is according to information reported by the New York Times and/or supplied by the Australian Department of Health.

So it would seem that with reasonable protective measures, particularly for vulnerable people, the risk of getting the disease can be reduced and chance of dying from it is very low.

It is the fear of coronavirus that is likely having a more harmful effect than the reality of the disease itself. Travel bans, quarantined visitors and masked travellers all fuel apprehension and even discrimination. The cost is likely to be substantial in terms of the hit to tourism and the education sector in the halt of incoming tourists and students from China.

The Consumers Health Forum advocates for consumers to be well-informed about their own and their community's health and services --- a practice that would be well-advised with coronavirus.

The best information on the novel coronavirus is available from the [Australian Department of Health](#), including posters for health facilities and factsheets for consumers and patients and the [World Health Organization](#).

**Leanne Wells**  
Chief Executive Officer

## News and Resources



### **Social Prescribing Roundtable - Report**

Social prescribing is the practice where health professionals, including GPs, have the resources and infrastructure to link patients with social services – or even social groups – in a bid to address the social determinants contributing to poor health and stave off the epidemic of loneliness and social isolation. A GP may, for example, suggest a patient join a local running group to enjoy the benefits of exercise and interaction.

CHF has partnered with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability to host a roundtable on social prescribing in Australia. The report on the roundtable has just been released.

The Australian Government is currently developing long-term plans for both primary healthcare and preventive health. This presents an opportunity to incorporate social prescribing into future health system planning and service delivery strategies.

[GET THE REPORT](#)

## Conferences & workshops

# CHF

Consumers Health  
Forum of Australia  
Consumers shaping health

## Consumers as leaders in healthcare



# CHF | SUMMIT 2020 Shifting Gears

Sydney 2-3 Sept 2020

We are hosting our **1st Australian and New Zealand Consumer Experience and Leadership in Healthcare Summit** in Sydney this September.

The **CHF Summit 2020 - Shifting Gears** will offer opportunity for both organisations and consumers to come together to explore, discuss and grow the concept and practice of consumer-centred care.

We will be **announcing our keynote speakers** and opening for abstract submissions and registrations in February 2020.

Registration is free for consumer advocates and leaders.

[Find out more](#)

## Consultations and surveys

### Australia's Health Panel



Australia's Health Panel allows consumers to comment on health policy and issues and offer feedback on current trends and discussions.

Join Australia's Health Panel and have your say on today's issues in health care. Please share details about Australia's Health Panel with your friends and colleagues.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## Plus Paternal - focus on fathers



Planning for and having a child are life-changing events. And while the health system importantly concentrates on mothers and babies, how well does it cater for men's health needs at this time? And what can be done to improve men's involvement?

**Healthy Male's Plus Paternal Project** is hoping to answer these questions and many more as it examines the man's journey to fatherhood. It will also explore the practice and views of health professionals who provide services in any point of the pathway from pre-conception to the end of the first year of a child's life.

### **Healthy Male is conducting two national surveys.**

1. Men's lived-experience survey – This survey is for men who have fathered or tried to father a child in the last five years.
2. Health professional survey – This survey is for health professionals from general practice, fertility support, midwifery, obstetrics and gynaecology services.

Take part in the online survey to have your say. You will be asked about your experiences at difference points in time and with different health professionals and services. Healthy Male (Andrology Australia) would like to hear your ideas for how the system could be improved to better meet the needs of men.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## Media Releases and editorial



### **Diana Aspinall, champion of health consumers**

We say farewell to Diana Aspinall, highly regarded consumer advocate and mentor ..... EDITORIAL: 24 JAN 2020

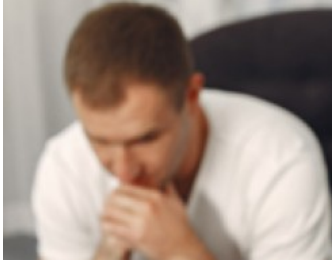
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## Government must heed regulator call for health insurance probe

The Federal Government must heed the call of its health insurance regulator and establish an independent review into private health insurance, the Consumers Health Forum says ..... MEDIA RELEASE: 5 FEB 2020

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## It's time to make access to mental health care a reality for all

As so many Australians who have needed mental health care know, the ideal of universal access to the services they need is a fiction. The Productivity Commission's draft report on mental health..... MEDIA RELEASE: 23 JAN 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)



## Great expectations on health require real action

The battery of reviews into Australia's health system currently underway indicate the Government recognises the need for real action and greater investment in health, but the next Federal Budget must show the Government is for real on health,.....

MEDIA RELEASE: 23 JAN 2020

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## Medical Costs Finder a disappointing first step

The Medical Costs Finder website is a disappointing first step towards the greater fees transparency so sadly lacking in Australia's private medical arrangements .....

MEDIA RELEASE: 30 JAN 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)



## Climate, health and saving life as we know it

With the consequences of bushfires sweeping Australia, the challenges in our health system have become more evident. CHF urges the Government to face the precarious risk to our health care head-on ....

EDITORIAL: 20 JAN 2020

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## Opportunities for participation



### Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are a way for members and the broader consumer community to be involved in our advocacy work and in shaping policy.

CHF has established Special Interest Groups to focus on Primary Health Care, Research & Data, Digital Health, Safety & Quality and Rural & Remote. SIGs help us to features even more consumer insight and perspective reflective of our Australian community..

Opportunities to join SIGs are advertised in newsletters and on our website.

[FIND OUT ABOUT CHF SIGS](#)

## Digital Health - Special Interest Group



### Expression of Interest

CHF has been working closely with the Australian Digital Health Agency on a range of digital health issues.

We are now funded to undertake a 12-month project to build consumer capacity in digital health policy development and implementation.

In support of this project, we are seeking expressions of interest from people or organisations who want to be part of a Digital Health Special Interest Group (SIG). The group will focus on the future of digital health, initially concentrating on electronic prescribing.

To join this group submit your [expression of interest](#).

Applications close at 5:30pm, [Friday 28 February 2020](#).

If you have questions, please contact **Anthony Egeland**, Policy Officer - Digital Health on email: [A.Egeland@chf.org.au](mailto:A.Egeland@chf.org.au) or tel: 02 6273 5444.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



## Join us!

As a member of CHF you will be kept up to date on key health reform issues through our publications and member alerts. CHF membership enables you to influence the national health agenda by contributing to CHF surveys and polls, consultations and campaigns. Members can draw on CHF position statements, media releases and policy submissions to inform your work and advocacy.

[BECOME A MEMBER](#)

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