

Consumers Shaping Health

CHF
Consumers Health
Forum **OF** Australia



News and views on health consumer issues - March 2020



How an epidemic may spur us towards healthy reforms

Concern about what additional burdens the spread of Covid19 might put on hospitals in Australia will further aggravate existing pressures on the health system.

There are already reports of over-worked emergency departments and long waiting lists to see specialists and for admissions for elective surgery in public hospitals, even in affluent places like Canberra.

The pressure on public health services is symptomatic of risks to the sustainability of our health system nationally and particularly on elderly and low-income Australians.

The vision of hospitals struggling to meet a potentially large and different challenge posed by Covid19 is already prompting consideration of changes to meet the hazards of widespread contagious disease.

Such measures might include reforms that have been long-suggested, including Medicare-financed telehealth for GPs. If patients could consult their GPs by telephone, skype or other video means that would reduce the need for unnecessary visits by patients. And wider government use of available beds in private hospitals for elective surgery could also lighten the heavy load on public wards.

We must hope that the optimism expressed by authorities that Australia is well-placed to meet a potential “surge” of cases triggered by Covid19.

That may be so. The fact is that too often there are pain points in the system that mean people are not taking up referrals for treatment because of high gap fees, that many people who have private treatment then face excessive out of pocket costs.

The result is that the impact of poor access to specialists is that people are getting sicker and their illness more chronic and when they finally get to hospital they are often more expensive to treat.

Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer



Coronavirus

The chance of coming into contact with coronavirus (Covid-2019) has increased with many more countries reporting cases, including Australia. Media outlets and social media channels are awash with news, opinions and wrong information.

CHF reinforces the message from the Chief Medical Officer and the Department of Health that people should follow the most recent information posted daily on the Department's website and from the [World Health Organisation](#).

The Department of Health has a dedicated page with [resources for health professionals](#), and the Victorian-based [Health Translations](#) has [some resources and factsheets](#) translated into simplified chinese and a few other common languages spoken by migrants in Australia.

DEPT OF HEALTH COVID-19 UPDATES



Most Common complaints against five health professions revealed

The most common complaints against five different health professions has been revealed in a comprehensive study by a team led by Professor Marilyn Walton from the University of Sydney.

The team examined over 12,600 complaints made over an 18 month period in the following disciplines:

- Medicine
- Dentistry
- Nursing and midwifery
- Pharmacy
- Psychology

Complaints were most often against doctors and dentists and least common for nurses and midwives. This is the first analysis of this type which spans across these five practices.

The most common cause of complaint was about clinical care (44% of all complaints), medication (10%) and health impairment of the practitioner (8%).

Male practitioners were at least twice as likely as female practitioners to have a complaint made against them.

The details of this research is available the February issue of *Australian Health Review* (AHR), the professional journal of the **Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association**.

[READ MORE](#)



Asthma and children: diagnosis and treatment

NPS MedicineWise has launched a new program on paediatric asthma which focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of the condition.

Recent discussions in the media about treatment options has highlighted the complexity of managing asthma.

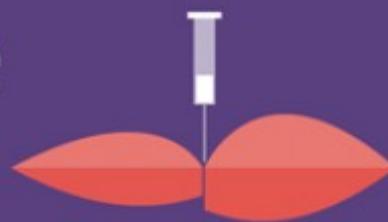
Children are not "small adults" and diagnostic and treatment approaches need to be designed with their specific needs in mind.

The new educational program from NPS MedicineWise will provide an opportunity for health professionals to refresh basic principles for children of all ages.

NPS MedicineWise is an independant, not-for-profit and evidence-based organisation committed to improving the way health technologies, including medicines and medical tests, are prescribed and used.

[READ MORE](#)

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Thinking of a cosmetic procedure or surgery?

A new education campaign '**be safe first,**' from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) helps consumers keep informed about the risks

associated with cosmetic procedures. The campaign includes resources to help consumers to know what kinds of questions to ask before going ahead with a cosmetic procedure. **Be safe first** encourages consumers to think seriously about who is undertaking the procedure, where it is performed, and the product being used before going through with any cosmetic procedure.

The 'be safe first' resources include a new 'cosmetic surgery and procedures' section on the Ahpra website with dedicated pages for specific audiences.

[READ MORE](#)

The National Health Information Strategy webinar for consumers

In this webinar, CHF will lead a consumer focused discussion on the National Health Information Strategy (NHIS) development. Consumers are invited to share their insights into what the NHIS should look like to improve the healthcare system for all Australians.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Preventing harm from Overdiagnosis

The risks and costs of overdiagnosis pose an important and complex issue for health consumers in Australia and many other countries.

Consumers need to be well informed and able to act on reliable evidence-based information about the risks or harms of a diagnosis - read more about Preventing Overdiagnosis from CHF director, Jan Donovan

An international conference on Preventing Overdiagnosis held in Sydney recently shone light on the varied issues raised by overdiagnosis that demand greater scrutiny by, and involvement with, consumers. Read CHF director Jan Donovan's blog at....

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2020 NIP influenza vaccination program: Advice from the Chief Medical Officer

The annual vaccination is the most important measure to prevent influenza and its complications and is recommended for all people aged 6 months and over (unless contraindicated).

To meet the anticipated demand for seasonal influenza vaccines in 2020, the Australian Government will be securing the largest supply of seasonal influenza vaccines ever through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for people most at risk. **NIP vaccines will be available in April, subject to local supply arrangements.**

[FIND OUT MORE](#)





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 – in a bid to address the social determinants contributing to poor health and stave off the epidemic of loneliness and social isolation.

The report on Social Prescribing by CHF and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) with the NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability has now been released.

[GET THE REPORT](#)

Conferences & workshops



Summit 2020 - Shifting Gears

Registrations are now open for our **Summit 2020 - Shifting Gears** in Sydney this September.

Keynote speakers include: ABC TV's Ellen Fanning, Dr Kate Mulligan, Director, Policy and Communications for the Alliance for Healthier Communities in Toronto, and Vincent Dumez, Co-Director and patient partner at the Centre of Excellence on Partnering with Patients and the Public, University of Montreal - [read more](#)

The summit will offer the opportunity for both organisations and consumers to come together to explore, discuss and grow the concept and practice of consumer-centred care, and be at the forefront of system change.

Submissions for abstracts are also **now open**. We invite you to propose topics relevant to contemporary issues in *health reform from a consumer perspective*. See more about [topics for submissions](#).

[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 members.

Join Australia's Health Panel today

[Find out more](#)

Media Releases and editorial



A virus epidemic may push us towards healthy reforms

How will the rising threat of the coronavirus, COVID-19, burden hospitals in a health system already under pressure. Can we find some opportunity to push through some much needed reforms, asks CHF CEO, Leanne Wells CANBERRA TIMES: 5 FEB 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)



Keeping body and mind together with Medicare

CEO, Leanne Wells, highlights the issues that arise when GPs are prevented from co-billing Medicare for physical and mental health issues CROAKEY: 03 MAR 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)



Consumer anxiety about climate health impacts shows need for effective government strategy

A large majority of those who participated in a recent Australia's Health Panel survey have expressed concern at a range of climate change impacts on health and say the government is not doing enough to counter potential harms. MEDIA RELEASE: 13 FEB 2020

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[READ ALL MEDIA RELEASES & BLOGS](#)

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](#)



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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