

Choosing Wisely --- the doctor-patient partnership

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Contradictory opinions between doctors or patients about the reasons for unnecessary care and tests highlight the importance of partnership in health care and better communication, the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said today.

Ms Wells was commenting on the results of surveys conducted by Choosing Wisely Australia, the movement which seeks to eliminate unnecessary medical tests and procedures that are not soundly based.

The Choosing Wisely survey found a disconnect between doctors and patients about the reasons behind unnecessary tests. While 41 per cent of GPs and 21 per cent specialists said they were asked by patients for unnecessary tests several times a week, 79 per cent of consumers said they had tests at their doctor's recommendation.

"We need to address this disconnect. Health care works best when both clinicians and patients work together. That requires the clinician to take the time to explain patient choices, and patients to be supported to take more control over their health and care. We can do this through the provision of better information like Choosing Wisely's '5 Questions' resources.

"This is where Choosing Wisely is making in-roads. It is pleasing that consumers who reported knowing about Choosing Wisely were more aware of the risks and harms associated with unnecessary care. People are grasping that more is not always better when it comes to healthcare.

"Given the wide and ever-growing range of treatments now routinely available, it is more important than ever that patients have an informed role in their treatment.

"Patients need to be engaged in a discussion about the right care choices for them. This adds up to a better experience of care, but better health outcomes and better use of health resources.

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Consumers shaping health

“Making more informed decisions leads to better outcomes for patients.

“The cost and complexity of modern health care has meant the Choosing Wisely movement is a truly timely development.

“Choosing Wisely is a global movement which is placing surgery and other procedures under scrutiny to eliminate unnecessary care. Often less invasive and more cost effective interventions and better experiences of care are the result of a more thorough discussion of care needs and preferences.

“More generally, Choosing Wisely is identifying areas where expensive surgery is often not justified.

“The Consumers Health Forum welcomes the involvement and leadership of medical organisations like the specialist colleges in identifying and eliminating medical practices shown to have no benefit.”

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