

Patient power blueprint released

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The Consumers Health Forum welcomes a new report released today which sets out a national blueprint for support and development of self-care.

The [blueprint for reform](#) developed by the Mitchell Institute of Victoria University calls for government leadership to spur Australians to take more interest in and control of their health care.

The report says COVID-19 has revealed, as never before, the importance of effective self-care for individuals and communities in responding to communicable diseases. It is central to the concept of prevention of both infectious and chronic diseases.

The CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, welcomed the report and CHF's involvement in the project.

"If we hear one thing repeatedly from consumers it is 'make healthcare easy for me'.

"Improving population self-care capabilities and levels of self-care activity are critical to reducing preventable chronic disease and avoidable premature deaths.

"Giving consumers agency – the information and skills – to not only self-manage well but understand and navigate the system better is key to this and can't be understated.

"The blueprint gives us several measures that, if implemented, would serve consumers and the community well in our bid to prevent both infectious and chronic diseases.

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“We agree with the Mitchell Institute’s Professor of Health Policy, Rosemary Calder, in saying that ‘Self-care is everyone’s business. COVID-19 has shown how central self-care is to everyone’s good health. Now is the time for a systematic approach, led by a national agenda to enable shared responsibility between government organisations and health care professionals to tackle health inequity and support self-care for all Australians’.”

Ms Wells said that the blueprint makes clear that self-care is, in part, about individual behaviour and the extent to which individuals are activated to take control of their health and care.

“But is also about the structural and environmental levers we need to influence to ensure people are supported to self-care.

“CHF has been working over the past few months with a Consumer Commission to examine the COVID-related positive disruptions to health service delivery we need to retain, and consider the fault lines exposed and the structural changes needed to set our future course.

“Without exception, there is support for the three priorities for immediate attention recommended in this blueprint:

- A **national health literacy strategy** is vital to equip people with better knowledge and skills, to the benefit of themselves and the system resulting from shared-decisions about their health care and follow-through of recommended care plans
- **Quality assurance** and helping people to determine which mobile apps to use is of rapidly growing importance but we need to ensure that the convenience of mobile devices does not mean poor quality advice.
- **Creating a supportive health workforce** that is competent in backing patients’ self-care should be part of good, contemporary health care.”

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