

Consumers Shaping Health



News and views on health consumer issues - April 2020



Telehealth and dealing with the downside

The decision this week to extend telehealth to all consultations with GPs and several other practitioner groups is a positive step for consumers and clinicians.

It facilitates access to consultations while removing the risk of infection to patients and doctors. And as we remark in [our blog](#), telehealth could be part of positive long term changes for health care.

The downside however is that telehealth removes the benefits of physical contact. That development may not seem of much consequence right now given our anxiety about catching COVID-19.

Telehealth is a symptom of life in the time of COVID. We are now conducting most of our affairs remotely from other people. Physical isolation is the new normal, made possible by telephones, video and internet.

This new world of isolation has also meant many of us will need more social and health supports to deal with mental challenges.

Self-care takes on a more importance, particularly for people who live with mental health issues.

The National Mental Health Commission says the intense and sometimes confusing focus on COVID-19 can be overwhelming. It urges people to refer to evidence-based and reputable sources of information that are updated regularly.

Both the commission and beyondblue have extensive sources of information to assist people seeking help and guidance.

There are also new programs now available from the Federal Government to support those with mental health issues in need of support.

Mental Health Australia advises that during this time of physical distancing and heightened anxiety due to the coronavirus, all Australians should look after their

mental health and recommends these five steps.

- Stay active
- Eat well
- Connect with others
- Limit coronavirus media consumption
- Try and keep to a routine and make it fun

Leanne Wells

Chief Executive Officer

News and Resources



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Australia has entered into a period of restrictions in the fight to defend ourselves against COVID-19. The movement of people into, and around the country, has been curtailed.

These restrictions are designed to help halt the spread of the disease. We are learning how to practice social distancing, reminded about personal hygiene to hospital standards, and deeply concerned for people who are losing their jobs and businesses, trapped by travel restrictions, or homeless, sick, elderly or vulnerable.

As always, CHF advocates caution in sharing information with your family, friends and colleagues without taking the time to verify the source and its authenticity. A proliferation of graphs are being shared on social media and everybody has become an armchair expert.

Turn to the website of the Department of Health first, to find the most recent, verified information available, posted daily, and to the website of the [World Health Organisation](#). Understanding and knowledge about COVID-19 is changing so rapidly that even news articles can be out-of-date.

Resources and information

Healthdirect - Australian Government Health advice portal for consumers, [Coronavirus information](#), [symptom checker](#) and helpline: 1800 022 222

Be Health Aware - [CHF portal for health resources](#)

The Department of Health has a dedicated page with [resources for health professionals](#)

[Resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities](#)

Translated resources for [people in migrant communities](#)

Handy mythbusters from the [World Health Organisation](#)



Advice for people caring for elder Australians

Talk with your loved ones and neighbours, ask them if they have **three people's phone numbers** that they can call for social contact and to ask for help. Make sure YOU have **three people's phone numbers** as well.

The Department of Health has made available a **30-minute online training module** is for health care workers in all settings. It covers the fundamentals of infection prevention and control for COVID-19. This training is recommended as a useful resource for everyone.

INFECTION CONTROL TRAINING

What's happening in your community?



COVID SPACE – a place for sharing stories

What's happening in your home and community to beat COVID-19?

Share your story - tell us on **COVID SPACE**

We want to hear about the smart moves and fresh steps in your community to counter the virus.

These could be new ideas from consumers to stem spread of infection, or innovations by doctors, nurses and clinics to increase access and improve care.

Sharing ideas that are making a difference where you live will help us all to beat the virus, increase access to care and calm our lives.

Email the Communications Team on Communications@chf.org.au or share your story with us on [Facebook](#)

EMAIL THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



TGA advice on disinfectants

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has provided an information guide for consumers, health professionals and healthcare facilities on the safe use of disinfectants.

[TGA WEBSITE](#)



My Health Record upgrade

The My Health Record website was recently upgraded to improve usability for consumers and healthcare providers.

The changes improve the way your medicines list appears, and provides a better experience logging in and setting your security controls.

[ACCESS YOUR RECORD](#)



A member writes

I am a patient at Forest Hill Medical Centre in Forest Hill, a suburb of Melbourne and yesterday I phoned them to get a repeat prescription, when I was told that they had arranged a "Car park flu clinic".

When I asked what this was, I was told "You book a slot, drive into the car park. Where there is a doctor & nurse from the clinic in the undercroft, you have the vax & wait 15 mins in your car or in the car park, then leave, no waiting room contact!".

So I made a booking and went along yesterday afternoon and that's just how it was, except there was a sign saying it was only for patients aged 65 or over (I am 68).

I must confess that I felt quite touched by this gesture from these chaps, especially after all the bad stuff in the press about panic-buying and other bad behaviour.

They also actually got a mention in the news.....

Life can still hold some surprises !!

[READ MORE](#)



False or misleading advertising

It is important for consumers be aware of false and misleading advertising.

Some people are taking advantage of the current situation by advertising products that claim to prevent or cure COVID-19.

TGA would like to hear from you about any illegal COVID-19 related advertising you see, and will take action in serious cases.

[MORE](#)



Managing asthma during COVID-19 epidemic

If you or a family member suffers from asthma, you might be feeling especially vulnerable during this coronavirus crisis.

Asthma Australia advises that it is accepted that people with long term lung conditions may have a higher likelihood of becoming seriously ill if infected, and you should take every precaution to avoid infection.

[ASTHMA AUSTRALIA](#)

The National Health Information Strategy webinar for consumers

ABC's Dr Norman Swan joins a special webinar on the National Health Information Strategy (NHIS) on crunch issues like public trust & personal health information.

Consumers are invited to share insights into what the NHIS should look like to improve the healthcare system for all Australians.

The webinar is now on Tues 14 April from 2:00-3:00pm

CHF will lead the consumer focused discussion on the NHIS development. Our partner for this project is the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) for this project.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



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

An annual flu vaccination is the most important measure to prevent influenza and its complications. It 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 - see your pharmacy or medical centre.**



[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Conferences & workshops

CHF
Consumers Health
Forum of Australia
Consumers shaping health

**Consumers
as leaders
in Healthcare**

**CHF | SUMMIT
2021**
Shifting Gears
Sydney 18-19 March 2021

Summit 2021 - Shifting Gears

The **CHF Summit: Shifting Gears** has been postponed until **18-19 March 2021** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The closing dates for abstract submissions and registrations have been extended. We look forward to welcoming you to our rescheduled conference 18-19 March 2021.

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



My Health Record Consumer Experience Survey

Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) and the Australian Digital Health Agency (the Agency) invites you to participate in this survey to share your experience using My Health Record.

The overall purpose of the survey is to better understand consumer experiences of using My Health Record in real life situations. An additional aim is to develop a series of case studies to capture opportunities for improvement and highlighted what is working well with My Health Record, from a consumer perspective.

Before you complete the survey, read the [Information Sheet](#).

The survey will close COB Tuesday, 14 April 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact Project Lead, **Leanne Kelly** on 02 6273 5444 or l.kelly@chf.org.au

[COMPLETE THE SURVEY](#)

Australia's Health Panel



Australia's Health Panel allows consumers to comment on health policy and issues, and offer feedback on 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. Our current survey is open and asks for your views on **telehealth services** in Australia.

[Find out more](#)

Media Releases and editorial



Health care rush may guide future of care

The rush of developments in health care triggered by COVID-19 is opening up significant changes in the health workforce which could bode well for health consumers not only now but in a post-COVID world.....
BLOGPOST: 1 APRIL 2020

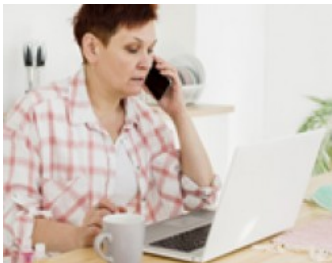
[LEARN MORE](#)



Private hospitals doing the right thing to join the fight against COVID-19

CHF welcomes the agreement with governments that will assure the substantial personnel and resources of private hospitals play a big role in the fight against COVID-19 MEDIA RELEASE: 31 MAR 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)



'Medicare at home' a vital step to counter COVID-19

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: 29 MAR 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)

[Health funds should defer premium rise.....](#) MEDIA RELEASE: 27 MAR 2020

[Expand telehealth to stop spread of coronavirus.....](#) MEDIA RELEASE: 23 MAR 2020

[Planned telehealth expansion welcome, but must look beyond doctors alone.....](#)
MEDIA RELEASE: 23 MAR 2020

[READ ALL MEDIA RELEASES & OPINION](#)

[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](#)

Consumers Health Forum



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