

Consumers Shaping Health

CHF
Consumers Health
Forum OF Australia



News and views on health consumer issues - Dec 2021



María Braeuner (@braeuNERD)

Covid – the test of a pandemic on our healthcare system

Trusted communication has been severely tested in the deluge of information that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that – so what have we learned?

We have learned that trust has been pivotal to rolling out Covid vaccination, as despite early missteps, Australia is now in a comfortable position with the current [national vaccination figure](#) of 88.7% for double vaccination of people 16 and over. Of course, there is devil in the detail with significant pockets of much lower vaccination rates.

It is also satisfying to see the release this week of [ATAGI's approval for vaccination](#) of children aged 5 – 11 years finalised and the government's [plans to start vaccinating](#) children in January 2022.

Researchers and scientists have learned that in order to bring the public along with them they have to be careful – about making statements preemptively, and thoughtful – in constructing complex messages, and receptive – to listening to how their information is received and interpreted.

In contrast, Australians trust their doctors more than any other professional, according to this [market research poll](#) released in October.

As I wrote in the [latest edition of MJA InSight](#), the newsletter for medical professionals by the Medical Journal of Australia, the pandemic has shown the Australian health care system can respond to an immediate threat to the health of our population, but

innovation, flexibility, and modernisation must be seized in readiness to adapt to future changes, including the impact of climate change on health.

It is also clear that the pandemic has [impacted young Australians](#) to a greater degree than any other cohort. Education has been disrupted, the casualisation of employment left many vulnerable, and lockdowns and closing social venues created have exacerbated mental health concerns. Of young people [surveyed recently by Mission Australia](#), 50.3% said COVID-19 had negatively affected their mental health. Further economic pain is likely to hit young tax payers.

This week, we joined with the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) to [call the political parties to prioritise better support](#) for Australians struggling with unstable employment or housing, which is so important in sharing economic participation across all social groups, and to continue to address funding gaps in care services, and to create a fairer tax system.

In the coming weeks and months, CHF will be consulting with our members to formulate our election strategy platform for the Federal election in 2022.

The pandemic has exposed faults in the health system, but these faults have been apparent for many years. Patching over underlying issues will never achieve our ambition of a first-class health care system which is equally accessible to all Australians – regardless of geographical location, education level, social status, or fluency in English.

The work of far-reaching visualisation and strategising to plan the health care system of the future is needed, and it is now accepted that the consumer voice makes better health care systems – a point underscored by the pandemic experience. This has been enshrined in the [National Safety and Quality Health Service \(NSQHS\) Standards](#) and other professional standards.

With consumer engagement embedded into health system design, health care system designers and policymakers need to understand how best to work with consumers. Consumers, in turn, need support and encouragement to be best placed for this transformational process.

CHF is advocating for a **Consumer Leadership Academy** to upskill consumer advocates in leveraging their voice in the policy debate.

The arrival of a new variant, Omicron, just before Christmas has put us all on notice that the pandemic is not over yet, and experts are calling for time to examine the early data on the risks of Omicron and how it should best be managed. Luckily for us in Australia, we may again be able to respond with insights observed through the Northern Hemisphere winter.

Covid has shaken us, but as we learn to live with the risk, we have a renewed sense of what is important for our healthy society. We already understand that the health system is fractured and confusing to navigate, but we have observed how we can work together as consumers, health professionals and government to achieve the common goals we all share. Covid, we hope, is a once in a lifetime event, but will it lead to renewed enthusiasm for the healthcare system we all deserve?

Image credit: María Braeuner (@braeuNERD) for [Lifeology SciComm challenge](#)

Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer



News and updates

Falls, troubles concentrating, dry mouth and more. Could it be your medicines?

Falls, confusion, trouble remembering and concentrating, dry mouth, constipation and trouble urinating. It is easy to think these are just signs of getting older, but they could be caused by your medicines. NPS MedicineWise is calling for people taking multiple medicines to watch for these signs as some medicines can cause these effects, and the more of these medicines you take, the worse it may get.

The list includes medicines for depression and anxiety, allergy medicines, pain medicines, medicines that treat Parkinson's disease and medicines to improve urination.

In a campaign to reduce the risk of harm from commonly prescribed medicines, NPS MedicineWise is visiting doctors across Australia to talk about the latest evidence and recommendations.

The problem is worse for older people as they often take more medicines, but also, the body changes as you age, and these medicines have a stronger effect on older people.

Taking too many of these medicines is associated with a 60% increase in falls that lead to hospitalisation, a 50% increase in the risk for dementia and a 30% increase in risk of death.

NPS MedicineWise has produced information in collaboration with the Older Peoples Advocacy Network (OPAN) and Carers Australia to help people [prepare for a medicines review](#), ask questions and [understand the options around changing your medicines](#) and make any [changes to the medicines you are taking](#).

National One Stop Shop for research

The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Healthcare (ACSQH) is conducting national consultations on behalf of all jurisdictions to scope the requirements for a national health and human research approvals platform – a National One Stop Shop.

The aim of the National One Stop Shop is to make it easier for patients, researchers, industry representatives and sponsors to find, conduct, participate and invest in high quality and ethical research in Australia.

The Commission has [launched two surveys to collect](#) input from the sector and the community on the requirements for a national health and human research platform.

The Commission is inviting written submissions on the One Stop Shop and the National Clinical Trials Front Door proposal, including suggestions for additional functionality. Please send written submissions to HMR@safetyandquality.gov.au.

The Commission is also encouraging participation in the initial phase of sector-wide consultations closing - 17 December 2021.

[READ MORE](#)



Are you a woman over 75 years?

Researchers at La Trobe University and Deakin University are conducting a study to explore breast cancer screening motivations and behaviors of Australian women.

They would love to talk with you about breast cancer screening.

You are invited to participate if you are aged over 75 years old and fit into one of the following categories:

1. Accessing the BreastScreen Australia program.
2. Accessing non-BreastScreen, private breast cancer screening (eg at a GP).
3. Not participating in breast cancer screening.

Participation involves.

If you decide to take part in the research, you would be asked to undertake a one-hour interview (online via Zoom, or over the phone) OR participate in a focus group (online via Zoom). You can choose the one that best suits you.

We will ask series of questions and will invite you to tell us about your experiences of breast cancer screening. Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary.

Reimbursement for participation

You will be offered a \$50 Coles Myer voucher for your participation and may be reimbursed for any reasonable travel, parking or other associated costs.

For More Information

If you would like more information or are interested in being part of the study, please contact: **Dr. Virginia Dickson-Swift**, La Trobe Rural Health School, La Trobe University Bendigo. Email: v.dickson-swift@latrobe.edu.au or phone 03 5444 7852 (leave a message and Virginia will call you to arrange an interview or answer any questions)

Consultation on Australia's 10 Year Cancer Plan

The Government has called for views on designing and delivering a plan for collaborative, coordinated and national action for cancer outcomes and experience.

CHF invites to you to a consultation that will feed back to the Government consumer needs for:

2 pm on Wednesday 19 January 2022

- a focus on prevention
- consumer centred data collection
- access to drug trials
- improving quality of life
- national consistency.

Please register to join or contact **Tammy Wolffs** (t.wolffs@chf.org.au) for details.

REGISTER

WEBINARS

Launch of the National Preventive Health Strategy

The National Preventive Health Strategy.2021-2030 (the Strategy) will officially launch on Monday 13 December 2021, 11:30am - 12:30pm AEDT.

The launch will take place at an online open webinar hosted by the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and the Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP will attend to officially launch the Strategy. The webinar will also include two guest speakers from the Strategy's Expert Steering Committee, Prof Andrew Wilson and Prof Emily Banks.

REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR



CHF
WEBINAR

Reimagining Healthcare
Where to now for Digital Health?

Join our panelists for a discussion on telehealth and virtual care through Covid

Wed 15 Dec
10:00 am (AEST)

Reimagining Healthcare

Where to now for digital health?

You are invited to join us for a special presentation on telehealth and virtual care

Virtual health uses digital technologies to deliver a broad range of health and community-based services to improve and support your health and wellbeing.

When: 15 Dec 2021

Time: 10:00 am (AEST) or 7:00 am (AWST)

Online event via zoom

Professor Suzanne Robinson and A/Prof Richard Norman from Curtin University will present their findings from recently completed studies done in partnership with CHF, funded by the Digital Health CRC and the Australian Government Department of Health.

Professor Robinson will be joined by distinguished guests;

- Professor Tim Shaw, Professor of eHealth, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney
- Amanda Cattermole PSM, CEO Australian Digital Health Agency
- Dr Amandeep Hansra, GP and Digital Health Consultant
- Laila Hallam, Consumer Advocate and Chair, HCSNW Covid taskforce

Facilitated by CHF CEO, Leanne Wells

REGISTER

Australia's Health Panel



Get your patient experience into the policy discussion

Students in healthcare delivery

Today's healthcare students are tomorrow's healthcare practitioners. Students need hands-on experience with consumers to become competent health care professionals.

However little is known about how consumers feel about their role in student education nor how student practitioners affect the consumers healthcare experience. Our survey for December will be "*Students in healthcare delivery.*"

We invite you to encourage family and friends to have a say on the pressing issues in healthcare by joining the panel.

Find out more about what you said - on the [preventative health strategy](#), [COVID vaccine passports](#) and [consumers participating in research](#) - [See the results](#) or [Join the Panel](#)

AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH PANEL

COVID-19 vaccine rollout



Information from the Australian Department of Health

Use the Department of Health's [Clinic Finder](#) to book your your COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccine [information in your language](#)

ATAGI advice on [vaccinating children](#) 5 - 11 years

The [Omicron variant](#)

The COVID-19 [restriction checker](#) from *healthdirect* is a search tool to help you find the restrictions in your state or territory as advice changes about COVID-19.

Advice from ATAGI about the [use of the AstraZeneca vaccine](#) during an outbreak.

COVID-19 news and media updates [from the Dept of Health](#)

Find the [answers to your questions](#) from medical experts.

Use the Department of Health page on [COVID-19 vaccinations](#) to access priority resources including videos and social media campaigns.

You can visit [healthdirect](#) or see your doctor for medical advice.

FOR MORE

Get involved



Consumer representative program

Consumer representatives are nominated for national committees to ensure that the views and interests of health consumers are represented at the national level. CHF supports consumer representatives by providing resources in a number of ways. Find out how to become a [Consumer Rep](#)

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM

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.

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. Find out more about CHF [Special Interest Groups](#).

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

[FIND OUT ABOUT SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS](#)

Participate in research



Media releases and editorial

[Greg Hunt pursued a long-term vision for Australia's healthcare](#)

The Consumers Health Forum thanks the Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, for his service to healthcare especially during the challenges of the COVID pandemic ... 3 Dec 2021 — Media release

[Health funds not meeting expectations](#)

Quarterly private health insurance data from the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) reveal that health funds have increased profits while benefits paid to members have dipped and out-of-pocket costs have grown ... 25 November 2021 — Media release

[The consuming issue of health care](#)

Why consumers and not patients? The consumer versus patient question is one we at the Consumers Health Forum have heard over the years, although .. 22 Nov 2021 — Blog

[Young voices for a healthy future](#)

Young consumer health leaders have described their concerns and prescribed some solutions in the latest edition of the Consumers Health Forum ejournal, Health Voices. Anxiety about the climate, mental health services for young people and how young Australians can take more control of their futures... 22 Nov 2021 — Media release

[READ ALL MEDIA RELEASES & OPINION](#)

CHFTalks webinar series

Covering COVID: media in the age of the pandemic

How well has the media handled the demands of reporting on and analyzing the biggest pandemic in a century? What have we learnt?

Hear from researchers, and journalists, including Professor Kerry McCallum, Dr Norman Swan and Dr Sanjaya Senanayake in a discussion about trust in the news, how COVID has impacted health literacy and how the Australian media landscape is holding up.

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

A primer on Primary Health Care reform

Ever wondered what's wrong with the Australian Health Care system? If it were up to you - what what YOU do to fix it.

Learn about Primary Health Care reform in this webinar with GP and PHN Board member, Dr Michael Wright, Pharmacist and Senior Lecturer at Curtin, Dr Fei Sim and CEO, National Rural Health Alliance and Leanne Wells CEO, Consumers Health Forum

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

Join Us – health consumers as partners in research

Health and medical research has never been more important in Australia. Whether that be research into COVID-19, research that uncovers life-saving treatments for common chronic conditions or studies shedding light on serious rare diseases.

Most Australians say they would be willing to participate in health and medical research, but very few are ever invited.

In this webinar researchers discuss their projects in healthy food shopping and air quality during the 2020 bushfire season and consumers talk about their role

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

Digital inclusion: Equity in health & wellbeing

In this webinar we hear from digital inclusion specialists, the Good Things Foundation, to discuss the critical role of digital inclusion in ensuring better health and wellbeing. We'll hear about the groups that are at greatest risk of exclusion in Australia, and of broadening health inequities, and about programs that work to close the digital divide.

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

[CHF YouTube channel](#)

Resources and Information

Turn to the website of the [Department of Health](#) to find the most recent, verified information, posted daily.

Use [healthdirect Australia](#), the Australian Government Health advice portal for consumers, for [information on COVID-19](#), the [symptom checker](#) and helpline: 1800 022 222.

Healthdirect provides free, approved medical advice and has delivered information to Australians on COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. Tools and information on COVID-19 can be accessed from the [COVID-19 section](#) of the *healthdirect* website.

NPS MedicineWise

A new [information hub from NPS MedicineWise](#) will help you be medicine wise during COVID-19

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

The **Australian Commission of Safety and Quality** has published a [FAQ page](#) on the **safe use of masks** for consumers and a [factsheet you can download](#).

Become a member



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.

[JOIN US - Become a member](#)

[Consumers Health Forum](#)

7B/17 Napier Close,
Deakin ACT 2600

02 6273 5444

info@chf.org.au

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