

*For the best of health...*

## Think socially, care personally

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We can do much to improve our own and others' health by applying lessons from the experiences of our society.

For the good of the planet we are urged to "Think globally, act locally".

For our own health we can all benefit if we Think socially, care personally.

This is a key theme of the latest issue of the Consumers Health Forum's ejournal *Health Voices*, says CEO, Leanne Wells.

"[\*Health Voices\*](#) brings together two concepts: personalised care and social prescribing. The latter involves routinely referring people to non-medical services that can help them manage their health and chronic conditions better.

"These ideas at first might seem quite distant, yet on deeper reflection we see they can have a powerful synergy.

"By learning from the health experiences of our society, we can adopt the lessons to our own healthcare. The authors in *Health Voices* write about a variety of ideas on social prescribing and personalised care from around the world and around Australia.

"We are fortunate to have once again a diverse range of knowledgeable writers for *Health Voices*, in this case stretching from England to New Zealand to Alice Springs.

"James Sanderson of England's National Health Service writes that clinicians will always be experts in conditions and diseases. But as he says, 'People are experts in themselves.' It is the combination of this expertise that can unlock different routes of care. People need to be able to make a fully informed choice as part of this process, he says.

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### Consumers shaping health

“New Zealand GP innovator, Dr Kerry Macaskill-Smith, shares the latest developments in personalised medicine that only a few years ago seemed more like science fiction. She predicts that by 2025 every doctor will be using pharmacogenomics (Pgx) – a personalised medicine tool – for all of their patients in the same way that doctors use any other lab test like blood counts.

“From Central Australia, Donna Ah Chee presents a different perspective on personalised care in writing about Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. These have demonstrated both the benefits and limits of personalised care, showing how personal choice in health needs to be supplemented and supported by processes of collective empowerment, she says. Such collective empowerment then supports and reinforces the capacity to engage in personalised health care at the individual level.

“There are more than a dozen additional thought-stirring contributions from consumer and health leaders in this issue of *Health Voices*. These should encourage us to realise there is so much to be gained by supporting consumers to understand more about their own and society’s health.

“CHF’s latest research study, [Patient Activation in Australians with Chronic Illness](#) canvassed more than 1,700 respondents to gauge their level of active engagement in their own health care. The results suggest that chronically ill patients with the highest levels of patient activation have improved health care experiences and outcomes compared to those with the lowest patient activation levels. It supports CHF’s long held view that more consumer engagement in health care, both at an individual level and in the design and management of health systems would yield significant advances for health care overall.

“CHF’s key recommendation from this research is that primary health care and prevention plans need to include measures to support personalised care and strengthen the capacity of people to manage their own health care.

“In other words, Think socially, care personally,” Ms Wells said.

ENDS

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