

POSITION STATEMENT

Consumer-Centred Health Care

Introduction

Health Consumers Alliance of SA Inc (HCA) is the peak body for health consumers and health consumer organisations in South Australia. HCA defines health consumers as “people who use, or are potential users, of health services including their family and carers”. Since 2002, HCA has supported a network of consumers, carers and experienced advocates, nominees and representatives. This is central to our vision:

‘Consumers at the centre of health in South Australia’.

Background

There are numerous definitions of consumer or patient-centred health care, which include many of the same principles or standards, however there is no internationally accepted definition.

What is clear is that consumer-centred care is part of a shift in focus. There is a growing consensus that the involvement of consumers, and a system focussed on the needs and preferences of consumers, may be the most cost-effective way to improve health outcomes.

Research demonstrates that consumer-centred care improves consumers’ experiences and creates public value for services, through improving the safety and quality of the health system.

Within Australia, health care organisations are becoming increasingly interested in patient-centred policy and partnership approaches to care.

HCA Position

HCA considers the consumer, with their carer as appropriate, as the only person in a position to make the decision on what consumer-centred healthcare means to them. Ultimately, the desired outcome of healthcare is better quality of life, and eventually end of life care and death, as defined by the consumer.

Consumer-centred care is about a collaborative and respectful partnership between service providers and consumers.

Purpose of the Position

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) explains that consumer-centred means:

- providing care that is easy for consumers to get when they need it
- healthcare staff respect and respond to consumer choices, values and needs
- forming partnerships between consumers, their families, carers and health care providers.

Providing consumer-centred care is acknowledged internationally as a central dimension of all health care. It is best practice to partner with consumers and implement consumer-centred care into:

- organisational governance
- developing scope of practice and models of care
- co-design, delivery and evaluation of services
- accreditation.

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights underpins the provision of safe and high-quality care, and supports a shared understanding of the rights of consumers and patients, between those seeking health care and those providing health care.

Summary

HCA believes it is useful to promote the essence of consumer-centred care – that is, the healthcare system should be designed around the consumer with respect for a person's preferences, values and needs.

HCA is committed to promoting consumer-centred care and has developed a related policy which supports this position statement with detail.

This commitment emerged from HCA's strategic inquiry process, which informed the development of HCA's Strategic Directions.

The ACSQHC notes that while there is wide and strong commitment to a healthcare system that is focused on the needs of consumers and carers, health services and health service providers can struggle with enacting the principles of patient-centred care in practice. Therefore, the ACSQHC Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers intention is to create a health service environment where this can be achieved.

In South Australia, SA Health is committed to ensuring consumer and community engagement in health care decisions, and values the contributions consumers and the community make in improving health service quality, equity and management.

Local Health Networks and individual health services have to varying degrees developed or are developing their own policy statements and systems in the area of consumer engagement or consumer-centred care.

HCA also supports the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights, which acknowledges consumers have the right to 'have our say and be heard; to be engaged in the decisions about our individual healthcare; and in health policy development and service planning, implementation and evaluation'.

References

Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2008. [Australian Charter of Health Care Rights](#), Commonwealth of Australia.

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Australian Diabetes Educators Association, 2015. [Person Centred Care for People with Diabetes](#).

SA Health, 2013. [A Framework for Active Partnership with Consumers and the Community](#), Government of South Australia.

SA Health, 2013. [A Guide for Engaging with Consumers and the Community](#), Government of South Australia.

For more information

www.hcasa.asn.au

www.safetyandquality.gov.au

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

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