

Partnering with consumers

At Monday's AGM we hosted four guest speakers, who presented on the importance of partnering with consumers in health care. Guest speaker Steve Wesselingh from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), spoke from the researcher's perspective. He described how in 2013 SAHMRI partnered with HCA to develop a Consumer and Community Engagement Framework for SAHMRI. The Framework was developed in collaboration with consumers and researchers and has subsequently been adopted by Robinson Research Institute, Adelaide BioMed City and the Translation Centre. Consumers are now on grant review panels, and consumer engagement has taught researchers that the best measure of impact is not on how many dollars are received or articles published, but the impact on health.

Allison Willis from HCA spoke from the HCA perspective about our current partnership with the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN), to develop their Consumer and Community Engagement strategy. She described the stages of the project, the broad consultation of staff and consumers, and presented a graphic of the NALHN Circuit-Tree of Consumer and Community Engagement.

Grant Phelps from Central Adelaide Local Health Network spoke from the perspective of the Local Health Network, and his perspective as Director of Clinical Governance. Grant emphasised the aim of making health care better, safer and cheaper, by having better processes, leadership and management. He noted the focus on hospitals in South Australia, rather than community-based services. Grant highlighted the importance of partnering with consumers in the development of CALHN's consumer and community engagement strategy, in partnership with HCA. He said the single biggest game changer is to make services more patient/community centred – this is a profound shift in thinking.

Lily Griffin from the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) spoke about the WCHN experience of partnering with consumers and how WCHN has implemented their Consumer and Community Engagement Plan. WCHN contracted HCA several years ago to assist in establishing the Plan – she considers WCHN were pioneers in a successful collaboration, with genuine consumer involvement and participation. Lily spoke of "Nothing about us without us", highlighting setting priorities, establishing infrastructure, getting people involved, and building capacity.

Julia Overton indicated the presentations reflected best practice partnerships and the benefits of consumer involvement. We thank all our guest speakers and everyone who attended.