ACT CARER STRATEGY

The ACT Government has approached Carers ACT to develop the first Carers Strategy in the ACT as a part of its 2016 Election commitments. Currently, there are more than 46,000 carers in Canberra who support family members and friends who are living with a disability, have mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, drug and alcohol dependencies and are elderly within our community. The strategy will aim to remove systemic barriers that impact the lives of carers in the ACT and their ability to achieve their caring role along with their own goals and aspirations. Carers ACT will be seeking input from the community to determine the areas that carers wish to see improvement or change through this strategy. There are a number of ways you can get involved and have your say:

- Complete the ACT Carer Strategy online survey
- Register to attend a Focus Group (individual or in a group setting) for later in the year
- Upload a video of yourself on Youtube or Instagram answering the question “If Canberra was carer friendly, what would it look like?”

For information on how to have your say into the development of the first ACT Carer Strategy, click here.

TGA CONSULTATION OF REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR SURGICAL MESH

On Friday 28 July 2017, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) released a consultation paper to address safety improvements that can be made in regulating the use of surgical mesh in patients. The TGA made three key recommendations:

1. All surgical mesh will be up-scheduled to Class 3 medical device with a 3 year transition
2. All medical devices will have an ID card called the Patient Implant Card, so the implants can be tracked
3. There will be a document similar to the Consumer Medicines Information pamphlet for medical devices

The TGA has invited the public to give their thoughts and comments on the consultation paper and its recommendations. It will be open for submissions for a four-week period and the Consumers Health
Forum of Australia (CHF) will be putting in a response. HCCA was a signatory to a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the number of women in Australia who have had transvaginal mesh implants and related matters. The submission is available online by clicking here. This is an important quality and safety issue. If you would like to discuss this issue please contact Darlene Cox at darlenecox@hcca.org.au.

If you would like to read the TGA consultation paper on surgical mesh, please find attached a copy with this newsletter.

CAHMA and World Hepatitis Day

Last Thursday Claudia and I joined CAHMA (The Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy), Hepatitis ACT and AIVL (Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League) at Margaret Timpson Park in Belconnen to celebrate and mark two important events: CAHMA and The Connection’s move to fantastic new premises in Northpoint Plaza Belconnen, and World Hepatitis Day. CAHMA is a peer-based drug user group, run by and for people who use, or have used, illicit drugs. CAHMA works to reduce the discrimination and stigma experienced by drug users. The Connection is the Indigenous program of CAHMA and offers a range of services including; peer support, representation and advocacy, referrals, information and education. World Hepatitis Day takes place on the 28th July to raise worldwide awareness about preventing, living with & treating Hepatitis—ultimately working towards the overall goal of eliminating Hepatitis in our communities. Information about prevention, testing, treatment and support for people living with Hepatitis in the ACT can be found here.

Kate Gorman
Coordinator, Consumer Representatives Program

L-R: Margaret McCulloch (HCCA Consumer Representative on the Pain Management Unit Committee), Kate Gorman (HCCA Consumer Representatives Program Coordinator), Indra Esguerra (ACT Greens), Giant Liver (Hepatitis ACT) Claudia Cresswell (HCCA Health Literacy Officer) Veronica Wensing (ACT Greens)

Seeking Interviewees – Have you used after-hours health care in the past 12 months?

- What was it like?
- Would you recommend it to a friend?
- What would have improved your experience?

We are interested in people’s experiences of after-hours care in the ACT. So if you have used any of the following, we’d like to hear from you:

- Walk-in Centre
- Canberra After-hours Locum Medical Service (CALMS)
- National Home Doctor Service (13SICK)
- Hospital emergency department
- Your local GP

Please call the office and ask to speak to either of the Kathryns or email us at kathryndwan@hcca.org.au or kathrynbian@hcca.org.au
HCCA EVENTS

Consumer Representatives Forum

Please note: This meeting is for current consumer representatives endorsed by HCCA. If you have any questions about this, please contact Kate Gorman on kategorman@hcca.org.au.

Time: 11:00am to 2:00pm
Date: Wednesday 30 August 2017
Venue: SHOUT Offices, large meeting room, Collett Place Pearce.
RSVP: To Kate Gorman by Wednesday 23 August on kategorman@hcca.org.au or on 6230 7800. Please advise of any dietary requirements.

HCCA Training Review Publication

HCCA are always looking for ways to improve. Our latest publication, the HCCA Training Review, is an in-depth review of the training we provide community members. We are excited by the recommendations identified and the steps we are taking to better support the community in effective consumer participation with our health service providers.

HCCA has, for many years, provided a free information/training course to community members. The course, which has been known as ‘Consumer Representatives Training’, has the purpose of increasing people’s knowledge of the ACT health system, educating them about ways that health consumers can participate in shaping the health system, and the role of HCCA in representing the needs of health care consumers in the ACT.

The course has evolved over time in response to changes in the health system, changes in consumer issues and the resources available.

HCCA has recently completed a review seeking to assess whether the training meets the needs of the ACT community, ACT health system (primarily ACT Health) and HCCA. It draws on expertise from a number of other state/territory based ‘sister’ health care consumer organisations who provide similar training. It also draws on input from current HCCA consumer representatives, past and present HCCA training and support staff.

If you would like to read the HCCA Consumer Representatives Training Review, click here.

The Canberra Hospital Inpatient Guide - HCCA feedback

HCCA was recently asked by ACT Health for feedback on The Canberra Hospital Inpatient Guide. Thank you for all your responses and feedback. We established a proactive and informative working group to develop this feedback and had over 90 people complete our online survey.

Our main feedback points were that the order or flow of the document needed to better reflect the patient journey and that information needed to be provided succinctly and clearly, and act as a general information source for the whole community.

The top 5 most important things consumers wanted to have included in the guide were: Useful Contacts, Things to bring with you into hospital, What to do before admission, Parking and a Site Map. The most common written feedback we received was that health staff must ensure that there were plenty of opportunities for consumers to ask questions and clarify throughout their stay and that the Inpatient Guide was exactly that, a guide and not the sole source of information.

We provided a few examples of publications which we thought reflected ‘best practice’ in hospital guides, including Eastern Health (Vic), Blacktown (NSW), as well as the ACT Health guide “Using health services in the ACT”.

The current version can be found here, but we are looking forward to the update.

If you would like a copy of our response, please contact Sally Deacon at sallydeacon@hcca.org.au.

Thanks once again for your input!
HEALTH POLICY UPDATE

Work continues on our palliative care and after-hours health care projects.

- Sarah Spiller has completed 15 interviews with carers of people who required palliative care. However, if you or someone you know has a story they would like to share, we are keen to listen. Please email sarahspiller@hcca.org.au or call the HCCA office.

- The survey “Consumer experience of general practice and after-hours health care in the ACT” has achieved a good response. However, if you missed out, we have extended the timeframe and the survey will now close at midnight on 2 August 2017. If you would like to complete the survey please click here. We particularly want to hear from people who live in the Inner South, Woden and Weston Creek.

HCCA made two submissions in the past fortnight.

- Australian Medical Council “Review Australasian College of Dermatologists” – HCCA made the point that training dermatologists better will not make a difference to access, which is the main problem in the ACT.

- Senate inquiry into the “Value and affordability of private health insurance and out-of-pocket medical costs” – We thank the many members who provided their personal stories to help shape this submission. We will share the link to our submission once this has been processed by the Senate Inquiry Committee.

Kathryn Dwan
Manager, Policy & Research

HEALTH LITERACY UPDATE

Struggle with chronic conditions? Ask your GP for a GP Management Plan and Team Care Arrangement

Struggling with chronic pain did not stop 80 people attending a riveting seminar recently on “Getting on Top of Pain” run by the RSI and Overuse Injury Association ACT and Pain Support ACT. A range of wonderful talks covered the work of the Pain Management Unit at the Canberra Hospital, the effects of pain on all aspects of life and strategies for management. Claudia Cresswell, HCCA Health Literacy Officer encouraged participants to share their tips on gaining the most from Medicare, achieving coordinated care from GPs and in building good health care teams. There was agreement of the value of joining support groups such as those that ran the seminar.

One very important point was that pain management requires a coordinated approach. In the ACT a coordinated approach is offered by the Canberra Hospital Pain Management Unit and some private providers, and your GP also plays an important role.

Your GP can offer a GP Management Plan that helps you set goals, identify supports and is reviewed regularly. Along with this Plan there is another tool, the Team Care Arrangement where the GP refers you to allied health professionals. Five of these are covered by Medicare, although there may be some payments to make depending on what is charged by the health professional. For more information on GP Care Plans and Team Care Arrangements, click here. Very few people had these plans in place or had heard of them. A number of people suggested that it is important to book a double appointment and ask your GP for both the Plan and the Arrangement.

You can also ask for a mental health plan that entitles you to 10 sessions with a psychologist. This is also funded by Medicare.

Claudia Cresswell
Health Literacy Project Officer
ITEMS OF INTEREST

Primary Care

Latest news from CHN

Read all the latest news from the Capital Health Network:

- Health InterACTion issue 47
- 2/52 Health Care Bulletin

Consumers say choosing PHI is too difficult

Consumer advocacy group CHOICE have found from a recent national survey that 44% of policyholders believed comparing policies was "difficult", while the rest was split between "neutral" and "easy". The survey also revealed the top reason for buying insurance was extras coverage and that the increasing cost of Private Health Insurance (PHI) is the primary reason consumers cancelled their policies. CHOICE examined thousands of extras cover policies from 23 funds as part of an investigation into the value of private health insurance. The analysis found 72% of the benefits paid by providers stagnated in value, in the three years from 2013, despite Australians paying 19% more. If you would like to read more about the results of the CHOICE survey on PHI, please see links below:

- Sydney Morning Herald - Choice says health insurance is too complex and stopping people from switching
- CHOICE – Australians are being short-changed on health insurance extras

My Health Record – Additional information for consumers

The Australian Digital Health Agency have recently published additional guidance to help consumers understand key My Health Record principles and functions, including matters related to security and privacy. This information can be accessed on the Australian Digital Health Agency website by clicking here.

ATODA Newsletter

Read all the latest news from Alcohol Tabaco and Other Drugs Association ACT:

- ATODA Newsletter – July 2017
ITEMS OF INTEREST (CONT.)

WCHM Newsletter
Read all the latest from Women’s Centre for Health Matters:
- WCHM Newsletter – July 2017

Safety and Quality
Women with disabilities - Contraception advice
Women With Disabilities ACT (WWD ACT) invites GPs and gynaecologists to complete an online survey which aims to improve our understanding of their experiences in advising women with disabilities (learning, physical or dual disability) about choosing a contraceptive device. In the ACT, there are 32,600 women with a disability. This survey is part of WWD ACT’s wider research on “Contraception and Consent” seeking to empower young and adult women with disabilities by granting them equal access to society and having control over their family planning needs. If you would like to participate in this survey, click here. It will be open until August 9 2017.

The future of education in the ACT – Have your say
The ACT Government have released their first discussion paper on the future of ACT public education system, and the government would like members of the community to have their say on how they would like the education to look like in the future. Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Yvette Berry MLA, has said that the discussion paper includes current education reforms that the government is considering in order to make primary and secondary education more accessible and to improve curriculums, providing our young people with more opportunities for the future. The government is looking for students, families, teachers and support staff, school communities as well as the broader community to give their thoughts on their plans. If you would like to read the discussion paper and have your say on the future of our education system, click here.

Latest news from ACOSS
Read all the latest news from the Australian Council of Social Service:
- ACOSS Newsletter – July 2017

Happy staff = Happy consumers
ACT Health staff complete a staff survey every year. In recent time this has not been shared with HCCA but we are interested in the results. The wellbeing, health and safety of health care staff are tightly linked to the quality, safety and experience of care which consumers receive. We recently came across a simple infographic which summarises the evidence for the interconnectivity between the patient experience and staff engagement, which can be seen below.

Select Committee on Estimates 2017-18 – Transcript
The Legislative Assembly of the ACT have released the proof transcript of the Select Committee on Estimates 2017-18 that occurred on 29 June 2017 with the ACT Health Directorate. If you are interested on what was discussed at this inquiry hearing, please find a copy of the transcript included with this newsletter.

Latest news from ACT COSS
Read all the latest news from the ACT Council of Social Service:
- ACT COSS Newsletter – Issue 80, Winter 2017
- ACT COSS eNotices – 28 July 2017

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ITEMS OF INTEREST (CONT.)

Inquiry into the 2016 ACT Election and Electoral Act - Update

The Select Committee on the 2016 ACT Elections and Electoral Act has published its submissions made by the public into its inquiry into what improvements could be made to the Electoral Act for future ACT elections. The Committee received 30 submissions that discussed lowering the voting age, improving donation rules and reporting timeframes and how to increase voter participation. The public submissions can now be accessed on their website by clicking here.

LOCAL EVENTS (CONT.)

Arthritis ACT ‘Thinking and Feeling Good’

Do you have a long-term chronic condition or disability? Would like to improve your feelings of wellbeing? If so, Join Arthritis ACT in a new supportive & confidential small group!

- Share feelings, thoughts, experiences & understandings
- Develop solutions & resources & skills to develop a personal plan for your wellbeing
- Develop relationships
- Become confident in navigating health and community services

This group is facilitated by a professional counsellor & educator & is conducted in 1.5 hour sessions over 6 weeks. Details are below:

**Date:** Commences Sunday 6 August 2017  
**Time:** 11:00am start  
**Venue:** Arthritis ACT Level 2A, 27 Mulley St Holder ACT 2611  
**Cost:** Members of Arthritis ACT & SHOUT affiliated organisations (including HCCA) $60, non-members $120

**Register:** Email Arthritis ACT at info@arthritisact.org.au or call them on 02 6288 4244. Number limits apply.

Contact Us

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HACKETT ACT 2602  
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www.hcca-act.blogspot.com

Please note that Consumer Bites provides a small snippet of health related articles our members might find interesting to consider, ponder and analyse. The HCCA does not purport to endorse any opinions or the veracity of claims contained within the articles.

Consumer Bites is the fortnightly newsletter from Health Care Consumers’ Association ACT

Editor: Khalia Lee