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HCCA EVENTS

All HCCA events have been cancelled until 30 June 2020 at this stage.

HCCA COVID-19 survey 4 results

- [Click link here.](#)

This week there has been considerable discussion in our membership and networks about expanding the criteria for COVID-19 testing. This week I checked in with a small group of members about this. The message from our members is clear - testing is our window onto the pandemic and how it is spreading and essential for enhancing our understanding of the pandemic.

As one member commented to me *“it seems to be the only way to really understand the spread and have an evidence base for how to treat and support people and manage resources”*.

Another member commented that *“the issue of asymptomatic carriers is of real concern once we get to community transmission, in particular. Until we get to that stage, then I would argue that testing symptomatic people is an important step to recognising that while we are currently ahead of the game, this can easily change”*.

In the commentary there was consideration of the laboratory capacity to support increased testing as well as the availability of tests. As one member said, *“They are pretty expensive and all imported”*.

Testing helps us to slow and reduce the spread and impact of the virus by enabling us to identify people infected with the virus and tracing and quarantining the people they have had contact with.

There are two kinds of tests for COVID-19 and both are essential for effective management of epidemics:

- those that test for the presence of the virus, aiming to establish whether an individual is currently infected;
- those that test for the presence of antibodies, aiming to establish whether an individual has been infected at some point in the past.

You can read more about the importance of testing from the [University of Oxford here](#).

Darlene Cox
Executive Director

COVID-19 UPDATE

The ACT Government has established a new helpline to assist the Canberra community through the challenges of COVID-19. The new helpline helps you stay informed as well as access services related to COVID-19, including for businesses. **Phone 6207 7244 (8am and 8pm daily)**. More info is at www.covid19.act.gov.au/contact-us

Appropriate Use of Disinfectants: Information for Consumers

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has identified disinfectants as being critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19. To help ensure the disinfectant is effective, it is important that consumers are aware of how to use them properly.

Disinfectants are liquids, sprays and wipes for use on surfaces to kill germs (bacteria and viruses). They can play an important role in infection control. They are not to be taken internally or used on the skin.

COVID-19 is an enveloped virus, which means it has an outer membrane. Enveloped viruses are easy to kill as the outer layer is easily damaged by most environmental disinfectants. Disinfectants containing $\geq 70\%$ alcohol, ammonium compounds (such as benzalkonium chloride) or diluted household bleach (including sodium hypochlorite) are suitable for use.

The disinfectant label usually includes information about the surfaces that it can be safely used on, like benchtops in the home, floors, toilet seats, workplaces and other premises.

Take care of hazard warnings and always use the products in a well-ventilated area. It is recommended that disposable gloves are worn when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Any visibly dirty surfaces should be pre-cleaned with a detergent, or soap and water solution, and allowed to dry prior to disinfection with the disinfectant.

Continued Dispensing and Emergency Supply of Medicines

The Chief Health Officer has signed a temporary standing order for emergency supply of medicines by pharmacists during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This arrangement is an extension of the standing order signed in January 2020 in response to the bushfire crisis. It will enable patients to receive their usual medications without a prescription, where the pharmacist is satisfied there is immediate need.

The Government has also extended its Continued Dispensing (Emergency Measures) arrangements for the COVID-19 outbreak, so that a patient can receive their usual medicine from a pharmacist without a prescription when there is an immediate need at the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) or Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) subsidised price. This scheme is fully enabled in the ACT.

People will be able to access a maximum PBS quantity or pack size, usually a months' supply, of their medicines. The medicine people will be able to access must have been previously prescribed and be for the continuation of current essential treatment. You can find out about the ACT arrangements [here](#) and on the [NPS Medicinewise site](#).

Electronic Prescribing - Australian National Health Plan for COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak has prompted new measures to support telehealth consultations and electronic prescribing, to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect people most at risk in the community.

The Australian Government has enabled the implementation of its [electronic prescribing initiative](#). Electronic prescriptions are now being fast-tracked so that patients can receive vital healthcare services while maintaining physical distancing and, where necessary, isolation. Necessary upgrades to both pharmacy and prescriber software are underway and electronic prescriptions are expected to be progressively available from the end of May. You can read more [here](#). Patients are encouraged to contact their doctor regarding options for remote medical consultations and prescriptions during the COVID-19 emergency.

TGA Warning on COVID-19 Self-Test Kits

The [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) (TGA), which regulates medical products in Australia, has warned consumers about products claiming to be home testing kits for COVID-19. Advertising or supplying such kits is prohibited in Australia, as these may give false positive or negative results, and lead to harm to yourself and to others.

Testing for COVID-19 should only be conducted in an accredited pathology laboratory, or by a healthcare professional at the point of care.

Consumers should also be wary of buying any other medical supplies over the internet, as such products may not conform to Australian standards and regulations. You can read the [full warning here](#). You can find out more about buying medicines over the [internet here](#).

Respiratory Health for Better COVID-19 Outcomes

An article from the [New England Complex Systems Institute](#) provides information about what an individual can do to improve pulmonary health and reduce the risk of a severe case of COVID-19. The following are recommendations to improve pulmonary health. Anyone with specific health concerns or respiratory issues should consult their physician before adopting them.

- Aerobic exercise - before infection, aerobic exercise is recommended to strengthen cardiovascular health.
- Keep windows open where temperatures allow - it is best for airflows to be outward, and not from an infected individual toward spaces where uninfected individuals are present.
- Spend time outdoors - balconies, back yards or patios, as well as walks while avoiding proximity to others.
- Deep breathing - deep breathing and exhalation bring fresh air in and can improve lung capacity. We typically breathe in and out only a fraction of our lung's capacity.

Hydration, balanced nutrition, regular sleep and appropriate exercise may also help.

Human Rights Must be Protected in COVID-19

A statement by human rights advocates calling for equal access to lifesaving medical treatment for people with disability during COVID-19 has been commissioned by [People with Disability Australia](#), [Women with Disabilities Australia](#), [National Ethnic Disability Alliance](#), [Australian Federation of Disability Organisations](#), [First Peoples Disability Network](#) and [ACTCOSS](#).

Signatories to the [Statement of Concern on COVID-19: Human rights, disability, and ethical decision-making](#) include former Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Inness AM; Vice-Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rosemary Kayess; and Professor of Bioethics at UNSW Jackie Leach Scully FAcSS, FRSA.

The Statement includes a ***Framework of human rights principles for ethical decision-making*** that state:

1. Health care should not be denied or limited to people with disability on the basis of impairment
2. People with disability should have access to health care, including emergency and critical health care, on the basis of equality with others and based on objective and non-discriminatory clinical criteria
3. Health care should not be denied or limited because a person with disability requires reasonable accommodation or adjustment
4. Health care should be provided on the basis of free and informed consent of the person with disability
5. Health care should not be denied or limited based on quality of life judgements about the person with disability
6. Ethical decision-making frameworks should be designed with close consultation and active involvement of people with disability and their representative organisations.

Australian governments must ensure COVID-19 public health responses do not discriminate against people with disability - a high-risk group - in decision making on access to life-saving medical treatment. People with disability may be at further risk from the devaluing of people with disability that leads to discrimination in access to life-saving health and medical services.

The [ACT Human Rights Act 2004](#) and the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) require that human rights prevail in situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

POLICY AND RESEARCH UPDATE

Our policy focus at the moment continues to be on COVID-19 (Coronavirus). Over the past four weeks we have released a survey over the end of the week and throughout the weekend.

The results from this survey are helping us, and our health system, to provide consumers in the ACT (and surrounds) with the information we need during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The survey aimed to find out:

- where people are looking for information about COVID-19
- whether you are finding the information you need
- whether your questions are being answered, and
- what questions you have that are not being answered.

We have analysed the results to feed into ACT Health, Canberra Health Services and Capital Health Network. Reports from all four surveys can be found on our website. We are also sharing our research with our friends at ACTCOSS, Women's Centre for Health Matters, Women with Disabilities ACT and COTA ACT.

Some more detailed analysis has been done on three subgroups (people aged 65+yrs, women and people with disabilities (these smaller reports for survey 4 will be available by 22 April). These reports are also accessible on the HCCA website:

Our Health Policy and Research Advisory Committee have been invaluable in providing support for this work and have assisted with the analysis each week.

Survey Findings

It has been interesting to see a change in focus of information needs between the surveys. This has been reflected in the kind of questions people are asking about COVID-19.

- In Survey 1, respondents emphasised risks, data, what to do and when, specific health conditions, as well as children and schools.
- In Survey 2, respondents demonstrated more of a focus on the confusion around conflicting information and approaches to COVID-19. There were more questions about testing and community transmission, as well as next stages of restrictions and timeframes.
- In Survey 3, respondents showed concern about the longer-term strategy and how long we would need to stay at home, face masks (particularly why we aren't using them in the community, and where they should be used). There were also lots of questions about how to apply the lockdown rules, and issues around food safety and cleaning various surfaces.
- In Survey 4, respondents had similar questions to Survey 3, with the majority focusing on issues around applying lockdown rules, particularly with variation between states. There was also a lot of interest in face masks and whether we should be using them more widely in the community, as well as trying to understand more about the virus, such as how it affects people differently, if you can catch it more than once, and possible treatments.

Feel free to take a look at the survey reports and to share the link. This work has given us some useful insights into consumer needs around information and communication in the current COVID-19 environment. The results will continue to inform our work during COVID-19.

*Kathryn Briant
Policy Officer*

HEALTH LITERACY UPDATE

Medical Appointments: Phone, Video or in Person – Preparation is Still Vital

Until the end of September, appointments with your GP, specialist and many other health providers can be by telehealth (video or phone). Commonwealth concession card holders, children under 16 years old and patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 are eligible for a free bulk-billed consultation. A telehealth appointment takes a little more preparation than a face-to-face appointment. The following tips may be of use.

Before the appointment:

1. Identify the right health professional. Health Direct has a nurse 24 hours/day who can give advice on your symptoms or suggest the right service. **Phone 1800 022 222** or go to the [Find a Health Service page](#).
2. Find out how much they will charge you for the appointment
3. Identify all your symptoms, when they occurred, and for how long.

Have to hand:

4. Have your medical history, list of symptoms, recent test or imaging reports and medicines list with you. Include any herbal remedies, vitamins or over-the-counter medicines in your list
5. Have your Medicare, Health Care or Veteran's Card handy
6. Identify the questions you want to ask with the most important ones first. Look at the Health Direct [Question Builder tool here](#) to create a list of questions

Get support:

7. Call the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) for language support on 131 450.
8. Ask someone to be with you at the appointment if you think you may forget something or feel intimidated by telehealth. Tell the health practitioner they are with you at the appointment.

Record the information:

9. Have pen and paper handy as you may want to write notes. You could also ask your practitioner if you could record the appointment.

Technology:

10. If you're using video, fix your technology so the sound and the vision are working well
11. Practice using your technology if it's unfamiliar to you. Some technology needs to be downloaded from the internet and you will need an account. Directions for how to use it will be on the internet. Try it out with a friend.
12. Your practitioner will give you information about how to make contact using a video service. There may be a tutorial to guide you. If not, ask the reception staff or see point 11 above.
13. Select a comfortable location where you are unlikely to be disturbed, without too much light behind you (makes it hard for your practitioner to see your face) and where you can hear well.

Timing:

14. Give yourself plenty of time before and during your appointment. Usually a health provider will contact you. As with face-to-face appointments, there may be delays. If you have several health concerns, ask for a long appointment.

Here is another resource for more [telehealth tips](#). Here is a [Commonwealth Fact Sheet on telehealth for consumers](#). Tips for what to do at the appointment and after the appointment will be included in the next newsletter.

Trust it or Trash it - Free Online Tool to Encourage Critical Thinking

Trust It or Trash It?

About | Contact | Español

1 Who said it?

2 When did they say it?

3 How did they know?

What is Trust It or Trash It?

This is a tool to help you think critically about the quality of health information (including websites, handouts, booklets, etc.). Click on *Who said it?* *When did they say it?* and *How did they know?* to guide you through the process.

There's always a lot of misinformation about health. If something doesn't sound quite true or sounds too easy, ask the three questions below. Check out the free [Trust It or Trash It?](#) online tool for more information.

*Claudia Cresswell
Health Literacy Officer*

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

Developing a Consumer Centric Principle for the SPIRE Project

Major Projects Canberra (MPC) has asked the SPIRE Project Consumer Reference Group (CRG) to help them develop a consumer-centric infrastructure principle for the project. This principle will be included in a framework that has been developed to guide the development, design and implementation of the SPIRE Project. MPC has contracted Lineaire Projects to work with the CRG and facilitate the development of this principle.

The CRG is seeking broader consumer feedback to assist them in the development of the consumer-centric principle. You can provide your views on the Canberra Hospital and the principle by completing a feedback form to record your insights and comments. You can participate by either:

1. Click on the link <https://www.menti.com/eym88iovvp> to complete an electronic form that will automatically record your responses; or
2. Complete the attached Word-version Feedback Form and forward your completed form to enquiries@lineaireprojects.com

NOTE: In response to the first question, “Which consumer reference group do you represent and/or belong to?” please enter ‘HCCA’.

Feedback is due by **cob Thursday 30 April 2020**. The collated responses will then be presented by Lineaire to the SPIRE Project CRG, to develop the consumer-centric infrastructure principle. If you need more information or help with completing the form, please email annemeuronen@hcca.org.au.

*Anne Meuronen
Community Participation Coordinator, Health Infrastructure*

ITEMS OF INTEREST

28 April 2020 - World Day of Safety and Health at Work

The world Day of Safety and Health at Work identifies 100 years of improving occupational safety and health in work. It looks to the future for continuing these efforts through major changes such as technology, demographics, sustainable development including climate change, and changes in work organization

A national occupational safety and health culture is one in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where governments, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, where the highest priority is accorded to the principle of prevention. You can read more [here](#). Once again, this is a critical awareness day in the current COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH PROJECT - Hip Fracture: What do Patients Think is the Ideal Rehabilitation Pathway?

The aim of this hip fracture study is to understand the experience of older people (or their carers) after breaking a hip, and to find out what their ideal rehabilitation process would look like.

This is a Physiotherapy Honours project which has been approved by the University of Canberra Ethics Committee (Project number 3386). More information is available online [here](#).

Consultation Open: Draft Safety & Quality Digital Mental Health Standards

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) is conducting an online survey to address safety and quality risks for digital mental health service users. The Commission is seeking feedback on the draft standards from consumers and carers, clinicians, service providers and any other interested stakeholders.

If you would like to participate in the online survey there is a link provided [here](#) Feedback can be provided by email to DMHS@safetyandquality.gov.au, or by post to Ben Prest, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, GPO Box 5480, Sydney NSW 2001.

The commission is also running webinars and consultation forums. You can register for these via the link above and find out more information about the consultation process. The Canberra consultation forum will be held on **Thursday 23 April 2020** from 10am to 12.30pm.

Useful Newsletters

Public Health Association of Australia

- April edition [here](#)

ACTCOSS

- COVID-19 for CALD communities [here](#)

Consumers Health Forum of Australia

- COVID-19 edition [here](#)

ACTCOSS

- COVID-19 e-Notice [here](#)

Women with Disabilities ACT

- April edition [here](#)

ACT Health COVID-19

- Latest update [here](#)

COVID-19 RESOURCES

For up to date information about COVID-19 check the following websites and social media channels:

ACT Health: <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

Healthdirect: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/coronavirus> (This has information in other languages)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ACTHealthDirectorate/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ACTHealth>

ACT Government Helpline: Ph 6207 7244 8am and 8pm or go to www.covid19.act.gov.au/contact-us

Commonwealth Department of Health: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

ACT Communicable Disease Control (CDC) team: Ph 5124 9213 or 9962 4155 after hours.

Symptom checker:

https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1504974/CV_Identifying-symptoms.pdf

If you are concerned and want further information you can call the Australian Government **Coronavirus Health Information Line** on [1800 020 080](tel:1800020080) 24 hours/day, seven days a week.

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION

HCCA has cancelled all events that were planned until 30 June. We will review this decision at that time. We advise consumer representatives not to attend face-to-face meetings of the committees that they are members of. Consumer representatives can continue to contribute to committee work remotely.

HCCA Consumer Participation Training was due to be held this May. It has been cancelled and we will schedule it later in the year. Please contact Karen James at karenjames@hacca.org.au or 6230 7800 to be notified when the training is to be held again.

Clinical Review Committee – CHS

Canberra Health Services (CHS) is seeking a consumer member on its Clinical Review Committee. This high-level committee oversees clinical review and audit processes, and critically assesses, reviews, reports and makes recommendations for assessment and action as required.

This position will suit an experienced consumer representative with an interest in quality and safety and clinical practice. For the foreseeable future, meetings are likely to involve videoconferencing. The successful consumer representative for this role will need a willingness and ability to read and consider a range of meeting papers before meetings occur.

More information about this opportunity and terms of Reference are available [here](#).

You can nominate for this opportunity [here](#). This opportunity closes on **Tuesday 21 April 2020**.

OTHER COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Project

This project funded by the Australian Government Department of Health will focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Australia. It aims to improve mental health services for people from CALD backgrounds by helping organisations and workers to better understand and respond to the needs of Australia's CALD communities.

[Mental Health Australia](#), the [Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia \(FECCA\)](#) and the [National Ethnic Disability Alliance \(NEDA\)](#) will work together with people from CALD backgrounds who have experienced mental health issues and their carers to achieve the aims of this national project.

As part of this National project, a CALD Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group will be formed to provide advice based on members' personal experience and connections to their communities. They are looking for applicants from the ACT. This is your unique opportunity to apply to be a member of the Carer and Consumer Group where your experiences and insight into this process will be valued.

Click here for the [Application Form](#), [Draft Terms of Reference \(TORs\)](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#). For role related queries or questions about the application process, contact Lauren Stark at lauren@fecca.org.au or ph 6282 5755. For more information on the project visit www.embracementalhealth.org.au

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) - General Practice Accreditation Coordinating Committee

Accreditation of general practices is voluntary; the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) develops standards for general practices and assessment criteria intended to improve quality of care for patients.

The National General Practice Accreditation Scheme has been developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) in collaboration with the RACGP and supports the consistent assessment of general practices against the standards.

The General Practice Accreditation Coordinating Committee oversees the accreditation process and provides input on issues relating to the implementation and assessment of the RACGP Standards as part of the National General Practice Accreditation Scheme.

Expressions of Interest are sought from suitably qualified and experienced consumer representatives to join the Co-ordinating Committee for the remainder of its' term to December 2020, with an expectation of a new two-year term to follow. The work consists of three teleconferences, to be held on 23 June, 17 September and 10 December 2020. The Commission will pay sitting fees, accommodation, travel and related expenses.

To apply, please complete a CHF nomination form available online [here](#). In addition, attach a letter of endorsement from HCCA and a PDF CV of no more than two pages.

For more information contact Ghislaine Martin at Consumers Health Forum on 02 6273 5444 or email g.martin@chf.org.au Expressions of Interest close at midnight on **Sunday 26 April 2020**. Please call Karen James on 6230 7800 or email karenjames@hcca.org.au to request a letter of endorsement from HCCA.

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Consumer Bites is the newsletter from **Health Care Consumers' Association ACT**

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.

Editor: Darlene Cox