

29 September 2015

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Dear Elaine,

RE: HCCA Feedback on Elective Surgery Access Patient Information 2015

I am writing to provide feedback on the *smoking and surgery patient information* and *general patient information 2015*.

Thank you for your response to our previous feedback on these documents. We are pleased to see that our feedback has been useful in shaping the next iteration of these documents.

The patient information and brochures were circulated to our members for comment and we have attached their feedback. One of the commonly made comments related to the order of the text in the smoking and surgery brochure. We have reordered this to reflect the consumer comments and this is attached for your consideration.

If any aspect of this response requires clarification please contact Eleanor Kerdo by email eleanorkerdo@hcca.org.au or by phoning the HCCA office on 6230 7800.

Yours sincerely,



Darlene Cox
Executive Director

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HCCA Feedback on Elective Surgery Access Smoking Patient Information and General Patient Information 2015

Submitted 29 September 2015

Contact: Darlene Cox
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HCCA Feedback on Elective Surgery Access Smoking Patient Information and General Patient Information 2015

Background

The **Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA)** is a health promotion organisation that was incorporated in 1978 to provide a voice for consumers on local health issues and now provides opportunities for health care consumers in the ACT to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- consumer representation
- consultations
- training in health rights and navigating the health system
- community forums
- information sessions about health services
- advocating for issues of concern to consumers
- works for the improvement of quality and safety of health services

1. General Comments

HCCA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to ACT Health on *the general Surgery Access information brochure*, and the *Smoking and Surgery* brochure for consumers. HCCA understands that improving elective surgery access is a very difficult task, but one that is of great importance for consumers. We consider that the consumer's right to access, safety, communication and participation to be extremely relevant when addressing the issue of elective surgery.

We are excited to see our comments shaping the redevelopment of both patient information sheets provided. We received on the whole positive feedback with minor changes to both documents to improve readability.

Smoking and Surgery

We are pleased to see a more supportive document, reflecting many of the suggestions of our members. The majority of feedback received was positive with only minor changes to document order and formatting these comments are included below;

No comments on the smoking brochure – looks OK to me. Well written and very informative. – HCCA Member

Surgery Smoking & You – page 2, ASSESS is a different font colour to ASK, ADVISE, ARRANGE and also we need MUCH larger print regarding Accessibility. – Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care NSW/ACT

The ACT Surgical Access brochure looks great. However, there are quite a few areas of the Surgery, Smoking and You brochure that are of concern. This is the Smoking & Surgery brochure that is produced by Quit Victoria: <http://www.quit.org.au/downloads/resource/general-brochures/smoking-and-surgery-brochure.pdf> It would be great if you could have a read and/or forward to the people working on this brochure, as there are discrepancies in the information contained in the ACT and the Quit Vic brochure (and the way the message is being communicated). – Cancer Council ACT

- Concern that focus on the brochure was on long term quitting and that this is not appropriate, it should be focused on smoking cessation or refraining from smoking in the on the lead up to surgery. This information needs to be based on *stages of change*¹
- Several members with a background in tobacco cessation mentioned that QUIT Victoria is best practice for patient information. <http://www.quit.org.au/resource-centre/>
- Some members felt that the introductory paragraph was paternalistic and could be more straight forward, stating that this brochure is for people who have indicated they smoke and are awaiting elective surgery. This brochure contains information about why it is important to cease smoking in the lead up to surgery and some support options that may be of use to you. The current first paragraph is fragmented and would be easier to read if it included *.../...will explain why it is necessary to stop smoking before surgery.*
- One member felt that the *Territory-wide Surgical Services* does not need to be on the front page as where the information came from should not be the focus.
- Several members said they felt the information provided in the brochure was good but was in a confusing order.

We suggest reordering the brochure as follows;

1. *Why is it important to give up before your operation?*
2. *Smoking and Anaesthesia*
3. *ACT Health is committed to help you stop smoking before surgery*
4. *What happens when you quit smoking?*
5. *Its NEVER TO LATE to give up*
6. *What kind of support is available?*

There was also a suggestion that the *Don't let stress get to you!* Should be removed.

¹ Tobacco Australia, The Process of Quitting (2015) Accessed: 22/09/2015 <http://www.tobaccoaustralia.org.au/chapter-7-cessation/7-3-the-process-of-quitting>

More photos of people and our diverse community could also be included. We are very pleased at the progression of this document and thank you for response to our previous feedback.

ACT Surgery Access

As with the smoking brochure, we are pleased that our feedback has been incorporated into the redrafting of this document. We are particularly happy to see informed consent and an explanation of what a Request for Admission is included.

The document is easier to read and we received on the whole, positive feedback. We again encourage you to use pictures that reflect the diverse members of the ACT community and understand that the ACT Health Multicultural Health Policy Unit can assist with this. This unit could also provide assistance with ensuring these documents are accessible to those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

ACT Surgical Access - really good. Just not sure what "clinically indicated" means. The Accessibility should be in much larger print, or at least the key words eg, TIS, Deaf etc. similar to what you have for QUITLINE. – Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care NSW/ACT

We note that the procedures around informed consent and elective surgery have recently changed due to the NSQHS accreditation process to mean that consent is re-confirmed on the day, this needs to be reflected in the brochure.

There are several typographic errors in this brochure including but not limited to, inconstant capitalisation, inconstant spacing, spelling errors, and sentence repetition. We assume there is internal ACT Health editing processes around these issues so have not included detailed comment in that area.

I have no particular comment on the content of each brochure, but I was a bit stunned at how many typographical errors there are, particularly in the first one (ACT Surgical Access), This lack of attention to detail in presentation significantly detracts from the messages. –Member

Some of our members still felt like the language in this booklet was too complex, suggesting that this was such an issue the document should be reviewed by a science communicator to ensure it is accessible to all consumers including those with low literacy levels.

In the *what to bring to hospital section* two members suggested adding glasses, hearing aids and other accessibility aids. Under *What you may need to arrange before you come to hospital section* we had a further suggestion to include a dot point *who will look after you as you recover?*

Many who commented felt the QUIT logo was too large and should be resized.

We had several people state they felt the informed consent section was lacking in information about your right to ask questions, about the risks or benefits of the procedure, or ask for more information so that you understand.

Under *who can I contact if I have any questions?* There is the number for the wait line service team, what if we have clinical question about our care? Who should we contact our GP? Our emergency department?

Here are further comments from members;

“In the elective surgery one the following passages are repetitive and I’m not sure quite what they are saying in the context of the previous words. Editing not complete?”

“Your surgery is important. Your health and wellbeing will always be a priority. This does not mean that your surgery is not important. Your health and wellbeing will always be a priority.”

The huge size of the Quitline and phone number is over the top – a bit offensive really. Otherwise good no further comment.” – HCCA Member

*“Feedback on elective surgery brochure: “If your condition changes and you believe you **need** your surgery earlier, then you **need** to be reviewed by your Surgeon/GP to be re-classified”*

Clumsy wording – suggest – “If your condition changes and you believe you require your surgery early than you will need to be reviewed by your surgeon...”

“Sometimes it is necessary to delay booked surgery to make way for life-threatening cases”

Clumsy wording - suggest – “ sometimes it is necessary to delay booked surgery because of life threatening cases needing to be prioritised”

*You can help us by letting us know if:
you have changed your address or contact details. you do not want to go ahead with your procedure, or you have had your procedure in another facility.*

Suggest having a separate dot point for each different point eg.

- *Changed your address*
- *Had your procedure somewhere else*
- *No longer wish to go ahead*
- *Please bring: Medicare card and Pyjamas*

Suggest adding underwear and toiletries to this list

*Suggest a different order in the where to make a complaint section
Health commissioner should come after the ACT Health and Calvary options” –
HCCA Member*

“The ACT Surgical Access brochure looks great.” – Cancer Council ACT

One of our members felt that the order of the information in the current booklet is currently difficult to follow and have begun re-drafting the earlier pages of the booklet. This is attached as Attachment 1 for your use.

We would like to suggest again a flow chart or visual aid would be useful to develop to depict the patient journey from referral to receiving access to elective surgery. We believe this would benefit staff as well as consumers. This would be extremely useful to explain the possible variations in patient journeys as a public patient in a public hospital or as a contracted patient.

We also still advocate for making the making more of the large guideline into fact sheets for the public to understand how elective surgery is delivered to public patients in the ACT.

Thank you again for recirculating the latest drafts of these documents. We look forward to providing you with further input on patient information in the future and acknowledge again how important documents like these are to improving health literacy in the ACT and helping us navigate the health system.

We are happy to discuss our submission with you further.