

Evaluating

health information with

consumers

Involving consumers in the development and evaluation of health information is essential for quality. Consumers should be involved:

- at the very beginning to help identify their information needs
- when reviewing or updating existing health information resources
- throughout the production process.

What to ask consumers about

When evaluating health information with consumers, ensure that what you ask them links with the aims of your health information – eg if it is intended to increase knowledge, ask whether consumers consider it does so.

Consumers are commonly asked to provide feedback on the following aspects of health information resources:

- **appeal:** will it be picked up and read?
- **readability:** can it be easily read and understood?
- **presentation:** eg format, pictures, style
- **content:** eg relevance, level of detail, any missing information
- **usefulness:** eg perceived helpfulness in making decisions, behaviour changes, encouraging involvement in care or increasing knowledge
- **credibility:** do they think the information is credible?
- **cultural appropriateness.**

Ways of seeking consumer feedback

Consumers can be asked for feedback individually, or in a group (sometimes called a focus group). This guide contains sample questions that could be used in a focus group, and a 'Quality checklist for reviewing health information' that can be completed by individual consumers or health professionals. These can be modified to suit your own circumstances.



Government of South Australia

Children, Youth and Women's
Health Service

Sample

focus group

questions for consumers

Appeal

Q. What was your initial reaction to this (brochure/booklet)? Can you tell me what you liked about it and what you disliked?

Examples of follow-up prompts: Did it hold your attention? Would you be likely to pick it up in a waiting room? What types of people do you think would read this?

Readability

Q. How readable do you think this (brochure/booklet) is? Could most people easily understand it?

Examples of follow-up prompts: Any technical terms or jargon not explained? Is the style and level of language used appropriate?

Presentation

Q. What are your views about the 'look and feel' of this (brochure/booklet) including the layout, colours, illustrations and graphics?

Content

Q. Does the (brochure/booklet) provide you with the information you need to ... 'prepare for surgery', 'help make decisions about treatment options', 'care for your child at home after discharge?' Adapt according to aims of the information.

Q. What do you think are the main messages of this (brochure/booklet)?

After the group: Check consumers' understanding against your intended messages. Do consumers actually understand the main messages after having read the brochure?

Perceived usefulness

Q. How useful do you think this information is?

Q. Would you be likely to use this information?

Examples of follow-up prompts: Would this information encourage you to make changes to your habits/lifestyle? Would you be likely to carry out the self-care advice? Adapt according to aims of the information.

Overall

Q. In summing up, what do you think are the best or most useful aspects of this (brochure/booklet)? What are least useful?

Q. How would you suggest that this (brochure/booklet) could be improved?

Quality checklist for reviewing health information

This checklist can be used with health professionals and consumers to:

- guide the development of new information
- review the quality of existing resources
- seek feedback about draft materials
- as a final quality check before production.

Clear communication

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Is the information clear and easily understood? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the information presented in sections? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Do the sections have clear headings? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • If diagrams/pictures are included, do they provide useful information? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • If diagrams/pictures are included, are they labelled/clear? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • If diagrams/pictures are included, are they of an adequate size? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the style and layout enhance the communication? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the language and tone used non-judgemental? (eg 'back pain need not cripple you unless you let it' is judgemental and should not be used) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the language used likely to be understood by those who will read it? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are three or more syllable words used as little as possible? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are medical terminologies, abbreviations and jargon explained? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is it written in the second person (eg 'you' instead of 'the patient')? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the terminology used consistent (ie, are the same words used to describe the same ideas, procedures or terms)? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does it avoid the use of global imperatives (eg you will, parents should, carers must)? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Quality content that meets consumers' needs

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Is it clear that consumers were involved in the development of the information? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are the aims or objectives of the information clearly stated? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the intended audience clearly stated? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the information meet the specified aims? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the most useful information presented first? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the information included current? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the evidence provided referenced? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the information provided in a balanced and non-biased way? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • If there are areas of uncertainty of knowledge, are they addressed? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are there any omissions of which consumers need to be aware? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Has information about further sources of support and help been included? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are the organisations and professional groups involved clearly identified? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the date of the publication included? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

This section is for information that aims to help consumers make informed decisions about their treatment and health care.

Content that assists informed decision making

- Does the information encourage and support shared decision making or assist consumers to ask questions about their own treatment? Yes Unsure No
- Are all the treatment options included, with descriptions of the risks and benefits? Yes Unsure No
- Is there an indication of the quality and level of evidence to support these options? Yes Unsure No
- Are the treatment outcomes quantified? Yes Unsure No
- Is information about the gaps and uncertainties in treatment provided? Yes Unsure No
- Is there mention of what might happen if the 'no treatment' option is selected? Yes Unsure No
- Are details of where consumers can obtain further information included? Yes Unsure No

Name of the resource reviewed:

Developed by:

Checklist completed by:

Date:

Comments:

Adapted from Victorian Department of Human Services (2000) Communicating with Consumers Series, Volume1: *Well Written Health Information: A Guide*. Melbourne, Victoria, Department of Human Services. www.health.vic.gov.au/consumer/downloads/dhs1074.pdf

Further information

Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (2006) *Bringing in the voice of the consumer*. Available from CYWHS Community Engagement Unit ph: 8161 6835.

The National Resource Centre for Consumer Participation in Health www.participateinhealth.org.au

Centre for Health Promotion

Other documents in this series available from the CHP

Developing quality consumer health information

Making your health information clear and readable

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