



Health Care Consumers' Association Inc
100 Maitland Street HACKETT ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6230 7800 Fax: 02 6230 7833
Email: adminofficer@hcca.org.au
ABN: 59 698 548 902

HCCA Feedback on the 'My Care and Safety' Information Sheet

Submitted 19 September 2013

The Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) of the ACT was formed over 30 years ago 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 welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the 'My Care and Safety' Information sheet. We believe it is a very worthwhile initiative to highlight the role consumers can play in optimising our own safety. The "*Picture Book Guide to Patient First*", funded by the WA Health Consumers Council, provides some excellent material from which the Health Directorate might like to draw.

The comments provided in this submission are based on the input of HCCA members, who showed considerable interest in the document and have provided valuable comments.

General Comments

We stress the importance of ensuring that the information sheet should give the assurance that staff will do everything in their power to minimise risks, particularly in the instances when patients are unable to help themselves.

An awareness and understanding of our Healthcare Rights is vital to our care and safety, but there is no mention of them in the information sheet.

The important role of family, next of kin and carers needs to be given far greater prominence. There is only brief mention of them under Discharge Planning.

There is no reference to eHealth records? Is this not an opportunity to promote the benefits of signing up to the My eHealth consumer portal and the My eHealth Record?

Layout and language

It is vital that the information provided should be clearly set out, easy to understand and in a sufficiently font large to accommodate the majority of readers. However, the overwhelming view of consumers is that the current draft does not deliver these requirements and that much of the language used is too prescriptive, bureaucratic, depersonalised and technical.

Acronyms and technical terms should be avoided – eg “*TEDs*” and “*ischaemic*”. There should be consistency in the grammatical use of contractions – eg “*we’ve*”, “*you’ve*”, “*haven’t*”. For example in “Keeping informed about your care”, ... “we would like you to be involved. Please tell us if we’ve missed anything.” There are similar examples of this inconsistency throughout the document.

The front page should convey a far clearer and simpler message.

The first two sentences, which appear under the main title, are too complicated. Surely the main message is simply that “*Your safety is our main priority. This leaflet explains how you can help us to provide you with the safest and highest quality of care*”?

The National Standards logos are far too prominent and space-consuming. Whilst their relevance may be apparent to many clinicians and health service public servants, they are likely to be meaningless to the majority of consumers and the general public. We suggest they should be removed altogether and replaced with the information about **Accessibility**.

Accessibility is a key message. However, it is written in very small print at the bottom of the second page and could easily be overlooked entirely. The message is unlikely to reach a major component of its target audience – ie those with vision impairment or who do not speak English as a first language. We wonder if printed copies of 'My Care and Safety' are available in other languages?

Patient identification

We suggest the following, minor, changes to the dot points:

- Are you wearing a patient identification band ? Normally this is worn on your wrist. Does it record your correct name and date of birth? If not, please advise any member of staff.
- It is very important to make sure we provide you with the correct medicine, treatment or procedure. We will ask you to say who you are, during your hospital stay, which we will check against the information on the identification band you are wearing.
- What can you do?
 - please ask us if there is anything you do not understand or anything which

concerns you about your care or treatment

- please understand that staff will ask your name and date of birth many times during your stay in hospital. This is a vital safety requirement to ensure you receive the correct treatment and/or procedure.

Pressure Injuries (bed sores)

The language used here is rather impersonal. It should be emphasised that pressure injuries can be extremely painful and extremely hard to heal; and that, in the majority of cases, they are entirely preventable. It is a negative statement to say "Some pressure injuries develop no matter what prevention is put in place"; it would be more positive, and accurate, to say "While some pressure sores may develop, even with good care, there are many ways to minimise this risk". Rather than "To reduce your risk you should", use "You can help reduce the risk by:" "*Repositioning*" is not a familiar word to many consumers, therefore we suggest dot point 9 be reworded as follows: "staff will assist you, if you need to change your position".

Blood Clot (Venous Thromboembolism – VTE)

To state "There are a number of ways to prevent blood clots – please ask your nurse or doctor", appears rather flippant. As suggested above, under Pressure Injuries, use "You can help reduce the risk by:" Also, for the sake of consistency, the same, modified, sentence could be used under Falls (eg "You can help reduce your risk of falling by") and Preventing Infections. There is no mention of TEDs in this section.

Keeping informed about your care

As we stated earlier, Healthcare Rights are not mentioned in the information sheet. They need to be included – and they are particularly relevant under this section. The first sentence should read "hand over" information, rather than "handover", which is a noun. We suggest it is important to explain to whom, and why, healthcare staff will be handing over information – eg immediately before a change of shift, to ensure the incoming team of doctors and nurses are fully aware of your medications etc". Some of the dot points are confusing – eg, "Have you had the opportunity to ask questions or if there are alternatives?" does not make sense. "Have you signed a form to show you agree or give permission?" – this implies there are a variety of forms; is this true, or is there one specific form for all? Is it a consent form or an agreement form? Are there several different forms?

Falls

Again, there needs to be more care taken in the way this is written. To begin by saying that "Falls happen more easily....." almost implies they are desirable!

"To reduce your risk of falling you should", is very prescriptive and domineering. Better to say "You can help reduce your risk of falling by".

The dot point about avoiding bi/multi focal glasses sends a confusing message; after all, some people could not see at all without their glasses; the point is that many

people need to wear bi/multi focal glasses, but they need to be accustomed to wearing them – it is about how comfortable they are in using such glasses.

“Staff will” – should not be a dot point. Perhaps this sentence should read “Staff will do all they can to provide the necessary equipment to reduce your risk of falling and will”:

To say “help you, if required” is discouraging and superfluous. Obviously, there is no need to offer help if it is not required, but to say “if required” almost implies a reluctance to do so – or that help will be given as a last resort. “Remember to use your call bell” sounds offhand. And what happens if the call bell is not in reach?

Similarly “take you for regular toileting if needed” - more empathetic language is needed here and an alternative expression for “regular toileting”, which is not how most people refer to getting washed and dressed/using the bathroom.

“keep your surroundings clear” – this is vague. What is meant by surroundings? How clear, and clear of what?

The development of a care plan needs to include carers and families.

Medication Safety

The dot points could be re-worded to encourage a more collaborative relationship between the patient and hospital staff. Eg:

- It is important that you understand why you are taking your medications. Please ask us, if you have questions or concerns about any of your medications.
- Our pharmacy staff will dispose of any of your medications you no longer require, for example those which have been stopped by your doctor.
- If you have a GP, please let us know his or her details, so that we can provide your GP with a list of your medications and any changes which have been made.

Discharge Planning

It is important to include carers and family members in all aspects of this section.

Again, the wording in this section conveys a negative message to the consumer. It gives the impression that things will be done to consumers, rather than done in consultation with them. Many older and frailer people may not be able to arrange their own transport home etc.

One consumer member asked whether patients are normally actually taken to a “Discharge Lounge” prior to discharge?

Preventing Infections

“Ask your visitors to wash their hands or use the hand rub provided” – we suggest the addition of “prior to, and during, their visit and on leaving the hospital.”

A final suggestion is that the following sentence be prominently displayed on the information sheet.

“Please share this pamphlet with your next of kin, family and/or carers”.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information.

Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT