

# Medicines Education: What Matters Most to Patients and Carers

## Introduction

The Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) Post Discharge Patient Experience Survey contains two questions relating to medicines management. Survey results are shared throughout the hospital to identify ways to improve the RMH patient experience.

During the July 2013 to March 2014 period, the majority of the 1,496 patients who responded were completely satisfied that the purpose of their discharge medicines were explained in a way they could understand (Figure 1).

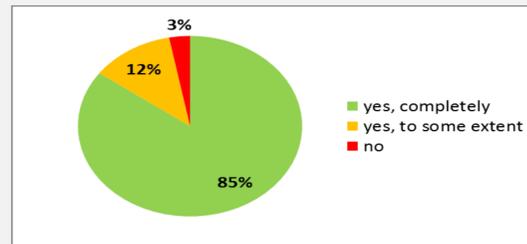


Figure 1: Responses to "Did a member of staff explain the purpose of the medicines you were to take at home in a way you could understand?"

However, during this same period 34% of patients responded that they were not completely satisfied with the information they received about medication side effects (Figure 2).

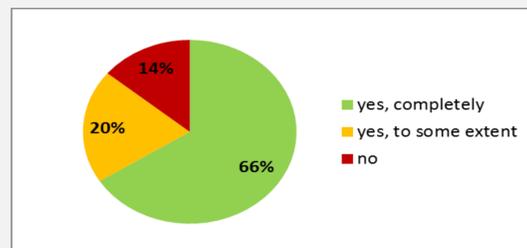


Figure 2: Responses to "Did a member of staff tell you about medication side effects to be aware of when you went home?"

The Pharmacy Department sought to explore potential reasons for consumers' lower satisfaction with information provided about side effects compared to the purpose of medicines.

## Aim

To collect qualitative data from patients and carers regarding their preferences for content and delivery of medicines information, to guide actions to improve medicines education.

## Methods

A consumer focus group was coordinated by the RMH Pharmacy Department, in consultation with the hospital's Community Engagement Manager.

Consumers were recruited by inviting current and recently discharged patients or their carers to participate. Clinical pharmacists were encouraged to ask inpatients and/or carers during the course of clinical care. Those listed on the hospital Consumer Register, including RMH volunteers, were also invited to participate via email.

Prior to the session, consumers were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the focus group and targeted questions. This allowed time for consumers to reflect on their experiences and prepare responses to specific issues highlighted in the survey.

A total of seven patients and carers, of various ages and experiences, attended the two hour session run by the Quality Use of Medicines Pharmacist and Deputy Director of Pharmacy.

Responses were recorded and displayed during the session to ensure transparency and reduce potential for misinterpretation of consumer responses.

Following the session, responses were de-identified and analysed to determine themes and preferences of the group.



RMH volunteers were invited to participate in the consumer focus group.

## Results

The consumer focus group identified consistent themes and preferences of patients and carers with regard to medicines education content and delivery.

Overall, consumers would like information about medicines to be:

- Individualised according to their needs and preferences identified at admission
- Provided earlier and throughout hospital admission
- Delivered by all staff (not just pharmacists)
- Not just about side effects (to include purpose and how/when to take)
- Utilise and refer to electronic tools or websites



## Conclusion

Conducting a consumer focus group provided qualitative data to identify patient/carer preferences for content and delivery of medicines information.

The results demonstrated the importance of establishing what matters most to patients and carers when considering improvements to medicines education to ensure they are consumer-focused.

This patient-focused approach is considered an integral part of our organisation's ongoing efforts to improve the patient experience, as measured by the RMH Post Discharge Patient Experience and the Victorian Healthcare Experience Surveys.

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