

## Healthy trio performs best when together

MEDIA RELEASE THURSDAY 16 MAY 2019

Australia's health system performs best when consumers play an active part in the "healthy trio" of safety, quality and literacy.

That's the view of many expert authors in the latest edition of [\*Health Voices, the e-journal of the Consumers Health Forum\*](#) published today.

"Health consumers and their representatives are being recognised and involved more and more in measures to improve safety and quality," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"It is often well-informed consumers whose own experience with sub-optimal health services leads them to press for improvements in safety and quality in healthcare.

"Consumers' health literacy – being engaged and informed about health care – is being recognised as an intrinsic feature of well-designed healthcare services.

"The part consumers can play in promoting safety and quality in healthcare is becoming more important than ever given the rise in chronic health conditions and the growth in the range and complexity of modern healthcare.

"The importance of working with consumers has been demonstrated again recently by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care which has consulted and collaborated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop new approaches that align with cultural and clinical needs, to help improve quality of care and health outcomes.

"There is plenty of scope to improve safety and quality in Australia's healthcare when we consider the scandals in aged care and the rising number of opioid-related deaths resulting from doctor-prescribed medication for chronic pain.

"Articles in this edition cover a range of safety, quality and literacy issues including the way eHealth could transform care for people living with serious disability, the importance of individual patient preferences in improving care and the health literacy challenges confronting new migrants to Australia.

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### Consumers shaping health

“It is clear that some health system managers and providers need to get up to speed with consumer health expectations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Health consumer representatives can be regarded as an ‘inconvenient guest’ when participating in some formal healthcare meetings.

“Resistance to consumer participation in healthcare administration should be a thing of the past. The now mandatory Partnering with Consumers standard in the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards is a powerful signal of this expectation.

“The Chair of CHF, Tony Lawson, writes that safety and quality accreditation reviews which have occurred following adverse events, have almost without exception called for measures that include greater involvement of consumers in all aspects of the health system,” Ms Wells said.

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