

I am a General Practitioner consulting in metropolitan Adelaide and wish to provide feedback on the Draft National Patient Charter of Rights. I believe the charter outlines patient rights appropriately and thoroughly, and provides valuable information to patients in this regard. My main concern is regarding the 4th question for consultation, regarding the balance of rights vs responsibilities.

I strongly believe that the Charter presents an exclusively entitled view of medical care, with no acknowledgement of the important role a patient's own actions play in the provision of high quality, safe and effective health care. I believe a balanced charter of rights and responsibilities is crucial for the provision of an effective and affordable health care system. I would support a much greater emphasis on patient responsibilities than is present in the current draft.

I believe that there are important personal responsibilities associated with most of the rights described.

ACCESS: A requirement for equitable access and efficient services is that patients attend all booked appointments for consultations or investigations. Failure to attend appointments or late arrivals directly impair the access of other patients to that service. I feel this is one of the most important responsibilities patients have in any health system.

RESPECT: Mutual respect and consideration are necessary for an effective therapeutic relationship between patient and health care provider. Patients have a right to be treated with respect, and for effective health provision, this respect must also be reciprocated. Patients have a responsibility to treat any health care provider in a polite and respectful manner, and to refrain from any abusive or threatening behaviour.

SAFETY: While patients have a right to be treated in a safe environment, so too does a health provider have a right to expect a safe work environment. Patients, therefore, have a responsibility to refrain from behaviour that threatens the safety of other patients or health providers. On occasions, a patient's behaviour may be adversely affected by their own medical or psychiatric illness. When this is not the case, inappropriate behaviour from a patient that threatens the personal safety of a health provider or other patient may forfeit the patient's right to medical care at that time from that service. In this case, alternative options for medical care should be offered to the patient.

COMMUNICATION: This is by definition a two-way process. It is important that patients are encouraged to provide full and frank disclosure of their medical condition, including symptoms and possible contributing factors, and history of past treatments. It is also crucial that patients are honest about the extent of their compliance with (or adherence to) prescribed treatments, for reasons of both safety and efficiency.

INFORMATION: Health Care Providers have the pre-dominant role in provision of information, but a patient also has important responsibilities. A patient has a responsibility to inform their health care provider of the progress of treatments undertaken, especially if an outcome is unexpected or has resulted in cessation of the treatment. A patient's responsibility to inform their health care provider is particularly important if there has been limited adherence to the agreed management plan or if they decide not to undergo a recommended treatment or diagnostic procedure.

PARTICIPATION: A patient's rights to informed decision making and informed choices are very important rights that are well described in the charter. This also comes with a responsibility to follow the agreed management plan, or to inform the health care provider if this is not their intention. A patient has both a right and responsibility to ask for further information if there is any uncertainty about their care; this is required for safe medical care and for the patient to effectively participate in the management plan.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft National Patient Charter of Rights. Without co-operation and active participation from patients, no health care service can be safe, efficient, equitable, accessible and effective. I would strongly support changes to provide a greater emphasis on patient responsibilities in the provision of their health care.

Yours sincerely

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