



Monday, 21 April 2008

National Patient Charter of Rights
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Engagement Unit**
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Re Draft National Patient Charter of Rights consultation

I am writing on behalf of the Peak Consumer and Community Advisory Group (PCCAG) at the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS) to provide collective feedback on the draft National Patient Charter of Rights consultation. The document has been circulated to all PCCAG members and individual members of the CYWHS Consumer Register to compile this feedback.

In general the document has been received positively and it is easy to read and understand. The importance of a document like this is acknowledged but the PCCAG believes it is essential to implement such a document at grass-roots level to ensure that all patients have easy access to it. However, the structure of the rights and principles being separate causes concern. It is suggested that there should be one cohesive document. It is believed that without the principles stated consumers may not understand their rights in a comprehensive way.

More specifically, the PCCAG would like to make the following recommendations:

Communication

- The word 'adequate' (page 5) used to define communication sounds weak and the PCCAG recommends the word effective is used instead.
- Open disclosure is an important issue to consumers and the PCCAG would like the word honest included in the definition of communication (page 5).

Information

- The PCCAG would like to see the inclusion of "patients need to know what health condition they are dealing with and then what the treatment, services and care associated with that is" under the right of Information.
- The last sentence regarding Information (page 7) seems to be out of place in a charter of 'rights' that is read as a responsibility of the patient. It is not relevant to this document and should sit within a responsibility document separately to this document.

Participation

- The PCCAG would like to see the right to a second opinion have a greater emphasis. This is a real barrier to people seeking health care and they do not understand that it is necessarily their right.

Redress

- Redress (Page 4, 5, 8, 13) is not a commonly used term, sounds aggressive and many consumers would not understand it. It also has suggestions of the occurrence of an adverse event. The PCCAG recommends that the word feedback be used as it is a more neutral and familiar term. This right is particularly important in the application of Quality and Safety measures, as only through patients coming forward and telling their experiences will systems be improved.
- The PCCAG also recommends that wording such as "concerns are dealt with properly and promptly" be added under the 'My Rights' column (page 5). The PCCAG believes that if consumers experience an adverse event they not only want their concern addressed, they want to be told that it was addressed and how, and what precautions are being taken that it won't happen again.
- Under the principles we believe that we should also point out that patients have access to assistance in making complaints where necessary or relevant.

A member of the PCCAG would also like to see the application of this document to Private Hospital Charters to allow for more transparency in private hospital dealings with their patients.

The PCCAG is happy for the above feedback to be published on the Commission's website.

Yours sincerely

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Executive Officer PCCAG

Cc Marg Brown