

# MAXIMISING YOUR CONTACT WITH CONSUMERS & CARERS DURING CONSULTATIONS

(Developed by members of the Consumer & Carer Hume Regional Forum, No Wrong Door)



These tips (suggestions) are aimed towards health service providers and centres. They have been developed with the aim of assisting staff engage and support consumers and carers.

- ❖ **Newsletters / Bulletins** are useful tools to provide information in relation to centre / practice updates, staff changes or new programs being offered.
- ❖ A **Practice Brochure** is an opportunity for your business to provide suggestions to consumers and carers regarding booking appointments, billing policies, visiting services, out of hours assistance, etc. It can also provide information about the Health Practice's complaints/suggestion process.
- ❖ **Waiting times** are an ongoing issue for both staff and consumers. Please ensure staff inform consumers upon arrival of any expected waiting time. Consumers also need to be educated about booking appointments appropriately to ensure Doctors do not run over into other peoples booked times.
- ❖ **Waiting room may need reviewing.** Despite best intentions, sometimes many hours can be spent in this room. This waiting room is a perfect opportunity for the Health Practice to provide consumers with various information relating to health promotion, illness prevention and available support services. This could be done by various means such as:
  - Videos: health information videos.
  - Brochures: provision of display racks, posters or information boards.
  - Newsletters: practice newsletters could be given out as people check in.
  - Information Folder: which could include local services, outreaching services, health brochures, etc
  - Music: Calming music is the best and provides an auditory barrier between the waiting room and reception desk.
  - Reading material: up-to-date magazines or newspapers are suggested, and should be relevant to all age groups.
  - Knitting: a good community program is the provision of a basket of wool with knitting needles. Those who are avid knitters, will be able to contribute to the "building" of a rug / scarf for those in need. It allows for constructive time spent, whilst waiting.
- ❖ **During the consultation**, consumers need health issues to be treated in a **holistic manner**, taking into consideration all aspects in their life upon which this illness may impact.
- ❖ Please be aware that consumers do not always fully **understand the diagnosis and prognosis** of illnesses. Please write this information down (or print information from the computer) to enable consumers to become and remain informed. Please consider any self help groups or resources that may be of additional support for identified illnesses.

- ❖ **Scripts:** Please ensure the patient / consumer knows when scripts are due to run out and when they need to make an appointment. Please ask them to do this on their way out, to ensure they have the appointment allocated for when they need it.
- ❖ **Appointment Reminders:** Not all patients use SMS (text messaging) or mobile phones. Please ask the patient which means of reminder they would find most useful.
- ❖ **Test Results:** Please advise the patient about how any test results will be fed back to them. If it is likely that a follow up appointment will be required – ensure they do this on their way out of the consultation.
- ❖ **Does the patient need extra assistance?** Please ask the patient if they may need extra assistance at home whilst they are unwell (or while they are caring for someone who is unwell). You can refer them, or engage various support services, such as: Meals on Wheels, Home Care, District Nurse, temporary disabled parking Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, etc.
- ❖ **Payment of consultations:** In some instances, patients / consumers may be struggling to pay their account or are having financial difficulties. This may make them hesitant in returning for follow up appointments. Please be mindful of this when billing.