



# healthUPdate

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## New technologies, medical devices and prostheses

CHF has developed an information paper about how new technologies and medical devices are approved for marketing, funded and monitored in use in Australia to help develop a strong consumer response to the Health Technology Assessment review, expected to be announced in late 2007. The information paper is available at <http://www.chf.org.au/projects/PROJ10/documents.asp> and hard copies are also being mailed to members and consumer representatives.

Members and consumer representatives are also invited to attend a CHF workshop on 10-11 December in Canberra. Invitations will be emailed shortly.

The workshop will also consider the review of the prostheses list arrangements.

See page 4 for further information.

## CHF calls for election to deliver the best health care possible

Many of the election health promises of both major political parties have merit, CHF Chairperson, Mitch Messer, said in a media release last week. He called on the best of all promises to be delivered after the election, regardless of which party wins, to create a better health system.

'For example, the Coalition's proposal to fund more practice nurses and Labor's proposal for GP super clinics will improve access to health care and free up hospitals, a win-win for consumers and the overburdened hospital system,' he said.

'CHF has been advocating for practice nurses because of their role to help patients with managing their conditions and reducing health risks. This leads to better health outcomes for patients, frees doctors to focus on diagnosis and treatment and takes the pressure off the health system.

'The proposed super clinics will also be good for consumers if they promote co-ordinated care and health promotion. With a range of services available in one place, health consumers will have an easier pathway through the current maze of health care that currently confronts them.'

Mitch said Australia's health care system was at a crucial juncture and called for a coordinated, cooperative review of health care that included all parts of the health care sector, including health consumers.

To see the full media release, go to [http://www.chf.org.au/media\\_releases/](http://www.chf.org.au/media_releases/).

## In the news

### Safe, good quality health care

CHF was mentioned in *The Herald Sun* on 29 October in an article calling for Australia to invest in cancer treatments that are available overseas. CHF was quoted calling for 'an election debate about health that will deliver safe, good quality health care to everyone when and where it is needed.'

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# From the Secretariat

## Advocacy

### Generic medicines awareness

Executive Director, Helen Hopkins, attended a meeting held by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing about a generic medicines awareness campaign following the recent reforms to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

She was pleased to note that CHF advice to the Department about the need for a campaign was confirmed by market research. Consumers need to know how major legislative changes relating to health care will affect them. The meeting confirmed that there is a growing awareness about generic medicines, but that consumer understanding of the regulation of safety and quality of generic medicines was still an issue. The Therapeutic Goods Administration will be invited to future meetings to help address these issues.

Helen reiterated the need for the campaign to go ahead regardless of which political party wins the election.

### CHF confirms positions

The Therapeutic Goods Administration Industry Consultative Committee meeting gave Helen the opportunity to reinforce CHF positions. She told the meeting that the postponement of the Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Authority (ANZPTA) was an opportunity for the TGA to take a more progressive approach to consumer involvement in the regulatory process in Australia.

The committee endorsed TGA plans for consultation and subsequent implementation of an enhanced, proactive post market monitoring regulatory system for all therapeutic goods that was originally recommended by the ANZPTA consultations and subsequently supported through feedback to the consultations. Helen reinforced the importance of the exchange of information between TGA adverse events databases, such as the Adverse Medicine Events line, and the 'mushrooming' numbers of registers so that consumers heard about emerging safety considerations. She also said any TGA developments in this area should follow NeHTA standards. Helen also advised that consumers saw post market follow-up as significant for the upcoming Health Technology Assessment Review.

During discussion on prescription medicines, Helen said CHF was keen to see monitoring of the impact of the PBS reforms on the quality use of medicine and the need for factual information for consumers about generic medicines. She also reinforced the importance to consumers of Consumer Medicines Information (CMI) and called for a complete set of CMIs to be held in one electronic database accessible to consumers.

When Helen asked about progress with the Complementary Medicines Implementation Review Group Communication Strategy, it was confirmed that this was progressing but would not be released until after the election.

### Patient Charter of Rights to involve consumers

CHF Vice Chairperson, Jan Donovan, attended the first meeting of the reference group for the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care National Patient Charter of Rights. Kathy Kendell attended as a consumer representative and a place for a second consumer representative position has been agreed and will be filled shortly.

Jan and Kathy were able to make a strong contribution to the meeting and the debate with other stakeholder representatives involved. Jan made a number of suggestions about the need for wider consultation and engagement if the Charter is to be owned by consumers and upheld and put into practice by health providers and health services around Australia. The Safety and Quality Commission has since approached CHF and is very keen to work with CHF and consumer organisations to ensure that the charter meets consumer needs and has our support.

### Other stakeholder events

Helen attended the election debate between the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, and Shadow Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, on 31 October at the National Press Club.

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## Project updates

### Implementing Private Health Reforms: Consumers have a say

#### New technologies, medical devices and prostheses – Workshop and Information Paper

A CHF workshop on 'New technologies, medical devices and prostheses' will be held 10-11 December in Canberra. The workshop will consider how new technologies and medical devices (including prostheses such as hip and knee replacements and heart stents) are approved for marketing in Australia and how they are monitored for safety, quality and cost effectiveness once in use.

The workshop will help CHF develop its response to the Health Technology Assessment Review, expected to be announced by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing in the coming months. It will also update consumers on the review of the prostheses list arrangements, and help CHF support more informed choices for consumers.

All members will be sent an invitation by email next week to nominate to attend this workshop. Members will soon receive a CHF information paper on 'New technologies, medical devices and prostheses'. It is also available from the website at <http://www.chf.org.au/projects/PROJ10/documents.asp>. Responses are due by 5 December.

#### Discussion sessions on health care for consumers with chronic conditions

CHF is holding consumer discussion sessions on health care for consumers with chronic conditions in Melbourne and Sydney this month. The sessions will explore what health care services are available to consumers with chronic conditions, with a particular focus on coordination and cost issues. Participants will be able to share their experiences and expectations in accessing coordinated care.

Participants will also be updated on the reforms to private health insurance that enable funds to cover broader health products and services, such as chronic disease management programs. The discussions will assist CHF provide input into development and implementation of such products and inform CHF work on informed financial consent.

If you would like to attend one of these sessions, please call the relevant contact person listed below:

- Tuesday 27 November, Melbourne  
Co-hosted by the Chronic Illness Alliance (Vic), RSVP to Dianne at the MS Society (VIC), (03) 9845 2738, [ddigenova@mssociety.com.au](mailto:ddigenova@mssociety.com.au) by Wednesday 21 November 2007
- Thursday 29 November, Sydney  
Co-hosted by the Chronic Illness Alliance of NSW, RSVP to Wendy at the MS Society (NSW), (02) 9646 0600, [reception@mssociety.com.au](mailto:reception@mssociety.com.au) by Friday 23 November 2007

The CHF project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

*Tamara Shanley*  
Policy Officer

#### Private Health Insurance Ombudsman's Website

Senior Policy Advisor, Craig Hooper, attended a recent meeting of the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman's Website Reference Group. The website, [www.privatehealth.gov.au](http://www.privatehealth.gov.au), continues to be of interest to people seeking information about private health insurance. It allows health consumers to browse and review information from more than 18,000 health insurance products from all 43 health insurance companies. During the national media campaign in May of this year, the website received more than 81,000 visitors and is still averaging 11,000 visitors per month.

A review of the look and information on the website is being undertaken and is expected to be completed next year. It will include improved product and information search functions that are expected to better match consumers needs, with search results being fewer, but better focused.

*Craig Hooper*  
Senior Policy Advisor

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## E-health for Consumers

### 'What's next in e-health': e-health industry and consumer workshop

CHF is holding an e-health industry and consumer workshop, 'What's next in e-health' in central Sydney on 27 November 2007. A small group of industry, government, consumer and health provider representatives are being invited to discuss success stories and sticking points in order to focus on practical next steps for making e-health work for consumers.

The challenge will be put to participants that the real consumers of e-health are the people who are using the internet for their health information and expecting better service provision and coordination through e-health. While governments and health service providers may be seen as the major purchasers, they are not the only beneficiaries.

Dr Ian Reinecke, CEO National E-Health Transition Authority, will provide an update on progress with e-health building blocks. From there, participants will discuss their practical experiences and consider case studies through facilitated discussion sessions and come up with a better understanding of how we can work together, including some concrete recommendations to progress e-health for consumers.

*Catherine Ellis*  
Policy Officer

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## CHF Safety and Quality Project: It's all about communication

### Open disclosure on the agenda

CHF is conducting community and consumer representative consultations on open disclosure to advise the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care on consumer perspectives around open disclosure. Information from the consultations will be used to inform the evaluation and possible further development of the Safety and Quality Commission's Open Disclosure Project.

### Workshops

Two workshops on open disclosure, equitable access to services and health rights will be conducted in Mackay, Queensland, on 3 December. One will target the general community and one the Aboriginal and Islander community. They will be facilitated in collaboration with the Mackay Division of General Practitioners and the Mackay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services.

### Teleconferences

CHF and the Safety and Quality Commission will be co-facilitating a series of teleconferences on open disclosure for consumer representatives and consumer organisations that have been involved in open disclosure issues. CHF will be seeking support from its state based consumer organisations to identify participants.

For further information please contact Sarah Jones on 6273 5444 or [S.Jones@chf.org.au](mailto:S.Jones@chf.org.au).

*Sarah Jones*  
Policy Officer

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## Health News

### Thank You Day

Research Australia and the National Health and Medical Research Council celebrated Research Australia's Thank You Day with the launch of *Great Minds in Australian Research*, a booklet that highlights the work of ten of Australia's current most eminent medical researchers.

CHF Communications Advisor, Penny Gibson, attended the Canberra launch by NHMRC CEO, Warwick Anderson, who said that the work of health and medical researchers saved thousands of lives each year, with Australia boasting some of the world's finest researchers.

'Thank You Day is an opportunity for people to send messages of appreciation to those involved in the field of medical research and thank them for their contribution to the health and wellbeing of Australians,' he said.

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Research Australia also promoted its recent publication, *Healthy Planet, Places and People*, which looks at how climate change and other global environmental changes and the proliferation of cities as our dominant habitat have great consequences for our wellbeing, health and survival. It calls for research to focus on how the mixture of influences on planet, place and person affects patterns of health and disease, and to provide effective prevention options.

For more information, go to <http://www.researchaustralia.org>.

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### **Complementary medicine research initiative**

CHF has advocated for a long time for funding for research on complementary medicines and welcomes the recent establishment of the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) to promote and build the capacity for scientific research into complementary medicine in Australia. NICM aims to connect researchers and practitioners with industry, the broader research community and other stakeholders.

NICM has now called for expressions of interest from institutions interested in becoming NICM Collaborative Centres, with support to start in April 2008. Research priorities will include research that: has the potential to impact positively on health and wellbeing of all Australians; promotes safety, efficacy and cost effectiveness of complementary medicine and translates this into policy and practice; and investigates methodological issues relevant to the specific nature of complementary medicine.

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## **Consumer Representatives Program**

### **Vacancies**

Consumer representatives are encouraged to apply for the following vacancies. Do not be discouraged if you are not successful the first time you apply as your application will assist us to know who might be interested when similar positions are offered in the future.

Nominees must complete a CHF nomination form, provide a current CV and a letter or email of endorsement from a Voting Member organisation of CHF or relevant consumer network. Please note that committee selection is based on your written application, which should address the selection criteria for the particular vacancy you are applying for.

The nomination form can be downloaded from the Members' Area of <http://www.chf.org.au> or by contacting CHF Committee Liaison Officer, Debbie Smith, on (02) 6273 5444 or [d.smith@CHF.org.au](mailto:d.smith@CHF.org.au). Debbie can also provide further information about most committees. CHF has ensured that sitting fees and travel costs are paid for the following vacancies.

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### **Australian Medical Council Accreditation Teams**

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) is an independent national standards body for medical education and training. It appoints expert teams to assess training programs against accreditation standards that define the knowledge, skills and professional attributes expected on graduation and, in broad terms, how the education and training should be provided. Teams report to an AMC accreditation committee that sets the accreditation policy and manages the accreditation process.

Selection of accreditation team members is rigorous and multifaceted because of the importance of the role and the need to select people with specific skills who can represent at a high level. Team members have a range of backgrounds. The Team Chair is always someone experienced in the AMC accreditation process and at least half the members of any team will be new to the process. The Team Chair and the AMC staff guide the team as they complete a series of standard steps that make up the assessment process.

AMC and CHF will provide periodic national training workshops for consumer representatives outlining the accreditation process and the skills required.

#### **Australian Medical Council Accreditation Teams:**

- Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians

Two Senior Consumer Representatives (one for each team) are required to participate on upcoming AMC Accreditation Teams. They must be alert to confidentiality requirements and conflict of interest issues. They are required to commit to a 12 month period and undertake extensive reading.

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The Accreditation Team assessing the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators will meet about six times from February through June 2008. Meetings include a one day preliminary meeting, a site visit (4-13 June) and teleconferences.

The Accreditation Team reviewing the Royal Australasian College of Physicians will meet approximately six times from March through August 2008. Meetings include a one day preliminary meeting, a site visit (20-29 August) and teleconferences.

The consumer representatives will participate in a peer review process and are expected to:

- provide consumer advice on the conduct of health consumer and community consultation activities;
- advocate for health consumer and community input to medical education, accreditation processes and relevant program and policy development;
- test the validity of the applicant's claims about the training program by questioning and analyzing documentation and referring to AMC accreditation standards; and
- contribute to the writing of the team's assessment report.

Expressions of interest are invited from Senior Consumer Representatives. Please refer to the CHF Terms of Reference for Senior Consumer Representatives (available on the CHF website at [http://www.chf.org.au/consumer\\_reps\\_program/policies.asp](http://www.chf.org.au/consumer_reps_program/policies.asp)) and explain how you could meet the additional expectations outlined above.

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## Reports

### Australian Medical Council Education Accreditation (General)

*Shiela Rimmer attending for Susan Mitchell*

The committee considered reports concerning the University of Otago, Deakin University, James Cook University, University of Notre Dame and Bond University.

A working group report, *Clinical Placements in Undergraduate Medical Education: applying the AMC standards to the assessment of clinical teaching placements*, recommended a greater emphasis on patient rights leading to an increased need to negotiate student involvement with patients. This was amended to 'patient rights and consumer issues'.

New guides have been prepared to assist medical schools apply for accreditation.

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### Other reports received

**Kate Thompson** - Medical Services Advisory Committee – MSAC 1112 – Bioenterics Gastric Balloon

**Geraldine Robertson** - Therapeutic Goods Administration – Complementary Medicines Implementation Reference Group

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### Consumer contribution

CHF Life Member, Janne Graham, participated in the recent Medical Industry Association of Australia (MIAA) Quality Product Awards as a judge from a consumer perspective. The inaugural Kerrin Rennie Award for Excellence in Medical Technology – Improving Quality of Life was open to all medical technology companies based or represented in Australia for a product used in the diagnosis, prevention, treatment or management of a disease or disability. The judging criteria were how the product contributed to improving patient outcomes by enhancing quality of life and the evidence of a positive contribution to health economic benefits.

The DC Bead (distributed by Device Technologies) won the award. This drug delivery system for the treatment of hepatocellular carcinoma ensures precise delivery of chemotherapy directly to the tumour site, thereby reducing drug-related toxicity and side effects and increasing efficacy of the treatment. It increases survival rates, decreases serious adverse events and improves quality of life for cancer patients.

### healthupdate

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