

OFFICE OF SAFETY AND QUALITY
OPEN DISCLOSURE
HEALTH CONSUMERS' COUNCIL SUBMISSION
MAY 2006

Background

The Health Consumers' Council is an independent community based organisation, representing the consumers' 'voice' in health policy, planning, research and service delivery. The Council advocates on behalf of consumers to government, doctors, other health professionals, hospitals and the wider health system. Funded by the Department of Health WA, the Council provides a state wide service. To find out more you can check our website www.hcc-wa.global.net.au.

p.1 Introduction

Figure 1 Health Consumers' Council recommends that Consumer/Community Participation is included as a Guiding Principle

p.3 C. KEY PRINCIPLES

Health Consumers' Council recommends under **Disclosure/Acknowledgement of an adverse event** an additional dot point

when an adverse event has occurred

Addition key principles

The Health Consumers' Council recommends two additional key principles:

Ongoing patient support

Health Consumers' Council is of the view that for some patients and their families there will be a need for ongoing support.

Contact and Communication

Health Consumers' Council is of the view there needs to be one known contact within the hospital who will assist/co-ordinate patient/family needs.

p.4 (a) Area Health Service

The Area Health Service will therefore ensure that adverse event reporting, analysis and changes introduced to prevent such an event, or minimise

likelihood of event happening again, will be annually reported (with identifying material for all parties removed).

Suggested headings:

what happened

in what clinical unit

what has been done to reduce likelihood of it happening again

what were the learnings.

This should be included in annual Report of the hospital/Area Health Service.

p.6 (a) Ensuring the Safety of the Patient

The Health Consumers' Council recommends an additional sentence to last paragraph

Where a patient requires ongoing help and support the organisation *will* provide advice... to appropriate social and counselling services *at no cost to the patient. In addition, one person will be the key contact for the family.*

p.9 Health Service Quality Improvement Act

The Health Consumers' Council is of the view that this Act is in need of reform. Patients and their families (where relevant) should be included in the investigation. And should receive a summary of the investigation.

Surely the investigation should be focused on:

“how harm occurred”

“who harm affected”

As National Patient Safety Authority (UK) reports, “you cannot understand error and harm in health care unless you talk to everyone”.

p.11 (1) Determine the level of response required

The Health Consumers Council recommends the inclusion of a decision tree in this document that represents how the level of response will be determined by the Health Service Executive. The tone of the document appears to indicate that fear of litigation and medico legal issues are the driving force behind open disclosure rather than the rights of patients and patient autonomy.

p.12 (a) What incidents should be disclosed?

The Health Consumers' Council is of the view that in the spirit of the Open Disclosure Standard that Area Health Services adopt a policy (that is developed in consultation with Community Advisory Council or District Health Advisory Council) about what incidents will be disclosed and that this policy is promoted and publicly available.

p.12 (2) Determine who will do the disclosure

The Health Consumers' Council believes that the Open Disclosure policy requires the involvement and engagement of senior medical and nursing staff. A junior team member must be accompanied by a more senior team member in discussions with patient and relatives.