

Hope Alexander MPH

Community Consultant and Health Educator

Health Consumers' Council Public Forum

Nurse Practitioners in the Future: A consumer perspective



The Consumer Perspective

Concepts

- Australia's ageing population
- GP shortage – situation unlikely to improve
- GPs appear to be reluctant to utilize Enhanced Care Plans
- Waiting times for GPs and Emergency Departments
- Nurse Practitioners have been in practice in some countries for up to 40 years
- Need to diversify health workforce and initiate change
- Opportunity for nurses to develop a career path



The Consumer Perspective

Current Trends

- The WHO estimates a current global shortage of 4.3 million health workers.
- Australia compares unfavourably with other OECD countries in respect to doctor numbers.
- The overall shortage of doctors in Australia is exaggerated by the misdistribution of the doctors relative to need and utility.
- Australia is one of the most reliant OECD countries on foreign doctors.
- Shortages better addressed ... by innovative health provider training and employment.

Ref: The Medical Journal of Australia 2009 www.mja.com.au



Consumer Perspective

Australian Better Health Initiative

- The WHO warns that the global burden of chronic disease is increasing rapidly, predicting that by 2020 chronic disease will account for almost $\frac{3}{4}$ deaths.
- Modern health services remain oriented to respond to acute conditions such as infectious diseases and injuries.
- Service delivery and funding arrangements generally favour an acute and short term response.

Ref: www.healthnetworks.health.wa.gov.au/abhi/project/self_management.cfm



Consumer Perspective

Australian Better Health Initiative cont.

- Key national priority “to encourage active patient self-management of chronic conditions”.
- Areas currently funded by WA Health to implement this strategy are:
 - Delivery and evaluation of selected self-management programs
 - Program Coordinators in north and south metropolitan
 - Country health services development of information resources

Ref: Professor Tanya Packer, May 2009, Perth, on Self Management



Consumer Perspective *“Patient-centred care”*

The experience (to the extent the informed, individual patient desires it) of transparency, individualization, recognition, respect, dignity, and choice in all matters, without exception, related to one’s person, circumstances, and relationships in health care.

Ref: <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/abstract/hlthaff.28.4.w555>



Consumer Perspective

Doctor Wait Times

“I think everybody in Australia now knows that there is a significant shortage of General Practitioners which has come about because of a previous policy. Fortunately there’s been some change but it will be a while yet before we manage to plug that shortfall.”

Ref: Dr Steve Wilson (2009) Chair of the AMA’s Council on General Practice



Consumer Perspective *Nurse Practitioners and GPs* *Equally Popular*

- Patients rated the quality of care as equal.
- Nurse practitioner consultations take longer .
- Patients are more likely to be asked to return.
- Nurse practitioner consultations lead to high levels of patient satisfaction ... high quality of care.
- No difference in health status, number of prescriptions ordered, health service utilisation.
- Nurse practitioners spent an average of 12.22 minutes in face to face contact compared to 9.20 minutes spent by GPs.



Consumer Perspective *Summary*

- Current situation not sustainable
 - Future health workforce
 - The way forward
-
- Thank You

