

MAY 2009 ISSUE

# DHAC Newsletter

## Health Consumers' Council

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## Welcome

Welcome to the May Issue of the District Health Advisory Councils (DHAC) e-newsletter.

The Patient for Patient Safety Conference is taking place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July for those who are attending. It will be a great conference with lots of relevant information about some of the issues facing patients in todays society.

The Health Consumers' Council is still looking to redesign the e-newsletter, as we would like it to be more representative of the different DHACs and the regions you operate in. If you could send us any photos of your region, photos of projects you are currently working on or anything you think represents your DHAC would be fantastic.

The DHAC which sends us the best photo, judged by Michele Kosky, Cheryl Rugdee and Danielle Scott will be featured in our DHAC e-newsletter.

The last issue of Health Matters was a special version dedicated to rural and remote areas. If you missed out on a copy, please call or contact us at the Health Consumers Council and we will organise to send one out to you.

If you have any items of interest that you would like to share with other DHACs, please send them through to [Danielle.scott@hconc.org.au](mailto:Danielle.scott@hconc.org.au)

Also, please circulate this newsletter to other members of your DHAC.

### Inside This Issue

- Newsletter re-designs
- Article from The Australian
- National Broadband Network - HCRRA
- Seeking Input from DHACs

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HCC seeks to enable consumers to have their say in the way that health services, policies and programs are developed.

Join Today!!

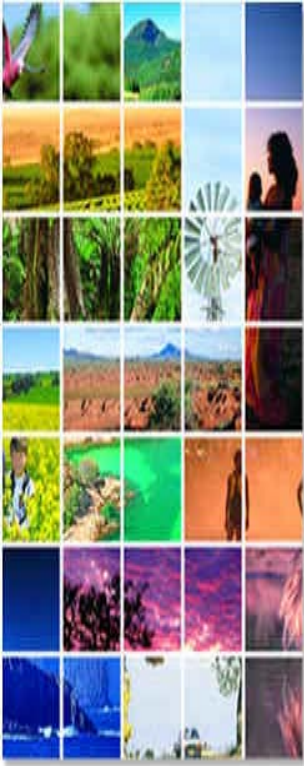
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The Health Consumers' Council

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## Put some Elbow into those household chores and live longer



**People who do the house work:** it may save their life, research in the American Journal of Epidemiology suggests. The study followed almost 14,000 people aged over 34 for an average of eight years. People who did physically intense housework were less likely to die than others who didn't. Men who did physically demanding housework had a 32 percent lower risk of death from any cause. In women, these chores were linked to a 30 percent lower risk of death. Unexpectedly, intense physical housework didn't seem to protect against heart disease.

**Women who get enough folic acid in their diet:** after research found it may help protect their babies against severe heart problems. Adequate folic acid intake in women about the time they conceive is known to reduce the risk of neural tube defects. Measures to increase folic acid include encouraging vitamin supplements and fortifying foods. A Canadian study, online in the BMJ, found a 1998 policy requiring flour and pasta products be fortified with folate also led to a reduction in severe heart defects among newborns.

**Children who are bullied:** after research linking bullying to the development of psychosis. The study in *Archives of General Psychiatry* involved 6437 12 year olds, who completed yearly physical and psychological assessments from the age of seven. Kids who were victims of bullying at eight to ten years of age were almost twice as likely to have had psychotic symptoms, such as hallucinations or delusions, in the previous six months than children who hadn't been victimised.

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This link was much stronger if the bullying was especially severe or long-lasting. The study supports the idea that psychosocial factors play a part in causing psychotic symptoms, which are linked to illnesses such as schizophrenia in later life, the authors say.

### **Best Debunk**

Australian GPs with a “special interest” in **back pain** are actually more ignorant about the problem than their peers. A survey of 3831 GPs in Victoria and NSW found those who claimed to have expertise in back pain scored lower in their knowledge of the most recent evidence on back-pain treatment and were more likely to erroneously believe that complete bed rest and avoidance of work was an appropriate treatment for acute lower back pain. They were also more inclined to believe than lumbar spine x-rays were useful. “This has serious implications for management of back pain in the community,” the authors say in *Spine*.

### **Strange but True**

**Computer hackers** who stole eight million medical records are demanding a \$US 10 million (\$13 million) ransom. According to a report online in the *BMJ*, the hackers infiltrated a prescription monitoring website and posted a ransom note in place of the sites home page demanding money in return for a password that would allow the site to restore the records. The site, maintained by the Virginia Department of Health Professions, allows health care professionals to monitor potential misuse of certain controlled drugs by tracking prescription information. The website has been removed and a criminal investigation in under way.

Adam Cresswell  
The Australian;  
[Date]

## National Broadband Network

The Commonwealth Government has decided to establish a national broadband network (NBN). In about eight years, if everything goes according to plan and the government has its way in the Senate, cities, regional centres and rural towns in Australia will have been connected through fibre optic transmission links and we will have gone some way towards catching up to the world leaders in this field, New Zealand.



It is not in our purview to comment on the economic justification for this decision or whether or not the Government will succeed or is justified in seeking private capital to effectively finance the scheme. We can say is that it sounds like good news for residents of rural and remote Australia, particularly in relation to the provision of health services. Remote diagnosis and care could be much improved and the need for hospitalisation reduced. The Australian Medical Association is right behind the initiative saying that a NBN would be:

**‘...able to support the transmission of highquality medical images thousands of kilometres. This would speed up diagnosis and perhaps reduce the need for some patients to travel long-distances for specialist consultations.’**

And not only would the transfer of medical imagery be improved. Medical reports, patient histories and other medical information could also be sent whizzing around the network with the click of a mouse.

Around ninety percent of homes and businesses will be covered by the NBN. The other ten percent, who mostly live in rural and remote Australia in towns with less than 1000 people. The Prime Minister stated that all premises not covered by the NBN are to be connected with next generation wireless and satellite technologies that will deliver broadband speeds of 12 megabits per second. Not quite the 100 megabits per second under the NBN, but around 200 times better than the present situation.

What we need to ensure is first, that this is an integral part of the overall NBN plan and not just a policy that has been tacked on as an afterthought to be implemented at some as yet undetermined point in the future, and secondly, that the bush will not be precluded from future technological advances because it is not being connected with optic fibre now along with everyone else.

### Seeking Input from DHACs

Dear DHACs, we are seeking an update of what is going on in your area so we can see if there is a trend of a problem occurring across the State. Can you send us the top three issues relating to health care faced by consumers in your region to include in next months update?



### Health Consumers' Council Membership

The Health Consumers' Council would like to encourage you to become a member. There are many benefits to becoming a member, besides the fact that it is totally free!

As a member of the Health Consumers' Council you will:

- Be kept up to date about health issues
- Be able to have your say on health policy and on the way that health services are delivered
- Receive free *Health Matters* magazines
- Be able to go on our distribution list so you can find out about all the events other consumers and the Health Consumers' Council are involved in

If you would like to become a member, please call Cheryl Rugdee on (08) 9221 3422 or Free Call 1800 620 780 and we will send out the appropriate forms.

The Health Consumers Council also has a website: [www.hconc.org.au](http://www.hconc.org.au) Visit the website today to find up to date health issues, relevant links and lots of interesting information.



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***Our mission***  
*To promote quality  
 health services in  
 Western Australia.*