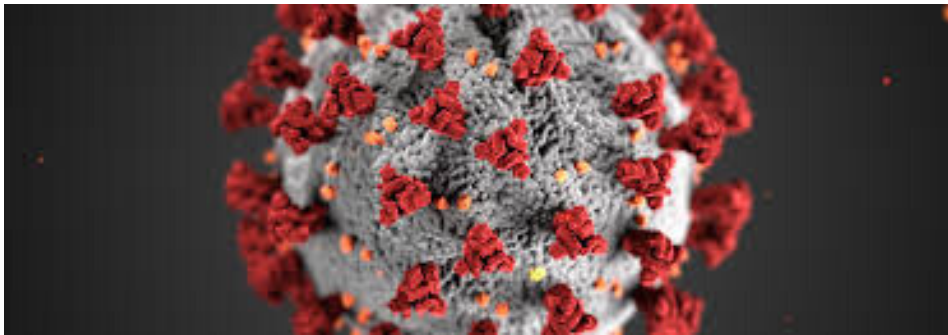




HEALTH CONSUMERS'
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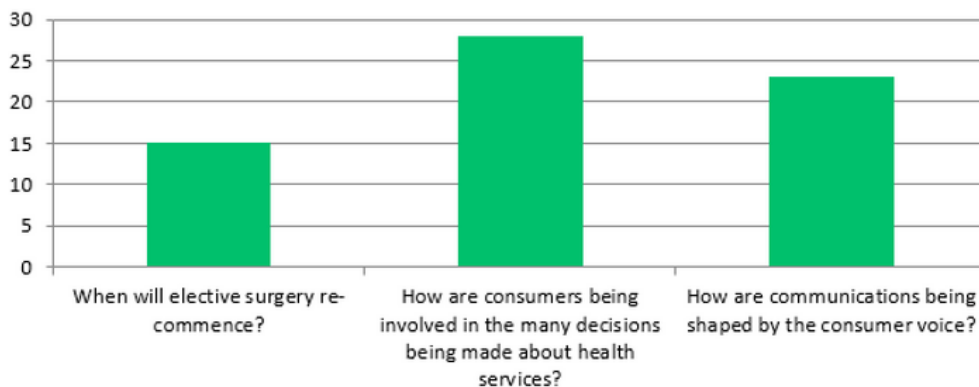
COVID-19 Feedback



COVID-19 Community of Interest Survey 1

- Elective Surgery
- Communications
- Engagement with Consumers

What are some of your current questions in relation to the WA response to COVID-19?



Other questions people had included the future progress of projects halted due to COVID-19; concerns about mental health impacts on the community, including the well-being of health professionals and teachers; the importance of protecting vulnerable community members.

Pip Brennan, Executive Director

Background

HCC's COVID Community of Interest was formed on 8th April 2020, when an invitation was sent to consumers and carers interested in becoming part of a statewide network to be involved in COVID-19 responses.

We aimed for the group to be a ready source of consumers and carers to call upon should COVID-19-related engagement opportunities arise at short notice.

First Survey

The first survey for the Community of Interest was released on 20th April and closed on 27th April and focused on elective surgery, engagement with consumers and communications.

There were 36 responses all up with the majority on the 20th and 25th of April.

Given the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion of people with questions about elective surgery decreased significantly in the second batch of responses as the parameters of how elective surgery was to be reintroduced were by then much clearer. Key insights are summarised overleaf.

How are consumers being involved in the many decisions being made about health services?

- Many respondents highlighted the importance of involving consumers, especially as the decisions being made impact on patients e.g. number of visitors, closure of services.
- The fact that existing engagement mechanisms have largely been abandoned (a notable exception being WA Country Health Services) spoke volumes for some respondents about the perceived lack of value of consumer involvement by health professionals.
- Some expressed understanding that consumer involvement had not occurred in the intense initial stages, but that it was now time to re-engage.
- There were also calls for time and space to be given to prepare for future emergencies to ensure consumer involvement is not the first thing to go, including better defining what would have been useful for services in the early stages of the pandemic.

How are communications being shaped by the consumer voice?

- Respondents felt that consumer involvement would be particularly valuable in shaping communications that work well and are clear for consumers. Many spoke of confusion about the conflicting messaging across different areas of life - attending work, children going to school etc.
- Others talked about the potential of a phone line to assist people in finding the right information for the particular issue, and being able to easily "fact-check."
- Those without good computer/ wifi/ data access were noted as being excluded from current engagement opportunities. Increased data costs for consumers attending online meetings were also mentioned.
- Some noted that consumers have been quick to pivot to online communications while services have been slower to embrace different ways of engaging.

When will elective surgery re-commence?

- Most people were supportive of elective surgery re-commencing, although there was some caution in terms of not over-loading hospitals, using up PPE supplies or causing a spike in COVID-19 infection rates. A suggestion was made to test all patients who were having elective surgery for COVID-19.
- There was significant interest in how the elective surgery list would be prioritised and comments in relation to it worsening the current back-log of elective surgery. Cancer patients in particular were mentioned and there was a suggestion that people who had had surgery cancelled being contacted as a priority even if just to advise them they would be in touch when possible.
- Others felt private hospitals could be dedicated to elective surgery, leaving public hospitals to manage COVID-19 patients.
- There was also concern about post-operative care as the assumption was patients would be discharged as soon as possible and may not be able to access supports such as physiotherapy.
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