
MEMO

To: Board Members
From: Judith Holmes, Consumer Council Chair
Date: 20 March 2019
Subject: **Consumer Council Report**

Status

This report contains:

- For decision
- Update
- Regular report
- For information

The Consumer Council met in Nelson on Monday 18 March 2019.

The Consumer Council has a strong focus on strengthening trust between clinical staff and consumers. The Council often discuss complaints or dissatisfaction, as well as “good news” stories voiced to the Council by members of the public about NMH services. The goal of our discussions is to pinpoint things that may need attention by looking for themes or patterns that could be addressed to strengthen good relationships, and also to get a measure of things that are working well. The dissatisfactions are invariably discussed within the Council, but not raised directly with NMH. The outcome of these discussions is, however, that the Council recommends that NMH consider providing patients with information on how to provide feedback with every discharge. The Council hope that this would make it easier for patients and whanau to provide their 'good news stories' as well as let us know how we could have done better. It appears that clarity on how to provide useful feedback is lacking. Harnessing all feedback is seen as an obvious and useful tool to use in strengthening our service.

Very robust discussion was had with the NMH Communications Manager. The Council heard about strategies and channels used by the Communications Team and discussed the challenges faced. The Council were pleased to hear that it is policy to prevent duplication of materials and work by looking to other robust sources for brochures, posters and messaging prior to creating NMH versions of work done in other DHBs. However, the Council does have concerns that patient information is being designed and distributed without being overseen by a central, nationally consistent group to ensure it meets appropriate health literacy, clinical, legal and brand standards throughout New Zealand.

The Clinical Governance Committee asked the Consumer Council to give their thoughts on staff members who are working with patients and not vaccinated. The Consumer Council recognises the right of staff to make their own decisions about vaccination, and also acknowledge that some staff will be unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons. However, the Council believes that patients should not be put at risk by being treated by unvaccinated staff. This is of particular significance in the context of the current measles outbreak. The Council recommends that patients are asked 'are you willing to be cared for by staff who are not vaccinated'. If they decline, then arrangements should be made for treatment by vaccinated staff. The ethics underlying this are clear. A patient seeking treatment would not expect exposure to further illness in the course of gaining remedial treatment.

Exposure to high levels of noise within the hospital was discussed. The Council is supportive of efforts to decrease noise. We acknowledge that some noise is inevitable in a hospital setting. The Council is keen that the hospital feel open, comfortable and welcoming to all patients and visitors. However, noise reduction efforts do not necessarily detract from this. The Council supported the idea of "quiet time" on wards. Quiet, private and uninterrupted sleep is essential to good healing. The Council recommends that the design of the new hospital takes into account patient need for privacy and quiet when appropriate.

The appointment process for the two new Consumer Council members is still underway.

Judith Holmes
Consumer Council Chair

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE BOARD RECEIVES THE CONSUMER COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT.