



Collaboration is key to Medication Safety

Collaboration with consumers is key for medication safety

Why wouldn't we engage with consumers? They're so engaging!



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I thought it would be easy to write a short, engaging piece about the benefits of working closely with consumers in medication safety. I love working with ours! They are fun and funny. They are part of the team. They are happy in our company, and we love theirs.

Engaging with consumers about medication safety keeps us all on our toes. Committee meetings are unavoidably content heavy, but we want our consumers included and involved. We present issues in a meaningful but concise way, and respond to consumers' questions with context and background condensed into a few short sentences, bringing them up to speed in a minute or two. It is like some 'reality' comedy show... quick... stimulating... entertaining... and we win if our consumers feel informed and comfortable!

Because when consumers feel comfortable and part of the team, they contribute in a way that is of immense value.

Consumer Committee Member #1: *"Meetings feel good to attend; items that could be dry and dense are often made more interesting by the atmosphere and staff attitude!"*

Consumer Committee Member #2: *"It is particularly rewarding to see all committee members' views being respected in a collaborative environment and as the consumer representative to feel my contribution is valued".*

Consumers commonly review documents and make formatting or grammar suggestions. However, their thoughtful sharing of experiences and insight is invaluable. After reviewing a Parkinson's disease information sheet for nurses, one consumer shared an experience about a friend who had made, what seemed to others, an unreasonable fuss about the time a parent took medications. It was clear to her now that no one had realised the importance of timeliness in this situation. We found her 'lived experience' a learning experience for us. We asked "what tips do we give patients and carers in our counselling that will help to share relevant information with others close to them and engage 'the village' to support medication safety?"

In my travels for accreditation, I often meet consumers of healthcare. I chat with patients in beds, day chemotherapy patients in chairs, and carers in the café. Even brief interactions are immensely valuable. One can gain tremendous insight into the culture of an organisation by listening to consumers of a service.

So, if I am so enthusiastic about the enormous benefits of collaboration with consumers, co-design, and genuine partnering to improve medication safety systems to a level we couldn't have achieved without their open and honest engagement, why has it not been easy to write this [World Patient Safety Day](#) article?

Because sadly one of the consumers I have worked with for a decade, an inspiring, active, joyous, generous woman, with a razor-sharp intellect and a cracker of a sense of humour, died a few days ago. What a loss for her family, friends, and for us.

I ask myself "Could the Australian healthcare system have done something better for my friend?"

The answer is yes. We still have work to do. So tomorrow, we will pick ourselves up and take a deep breath, listen to and learn from other people who care as much as we do, and continue striving to make a difference.
