

Cancer treatment options & informed financial consent

POSITION STATEMENT

ISSUE

People with cancer are often not aware of the treatment options available to them, as well as any out-of-pocket expenses in order to make informed choices, whether in the private or public sector. The clarity of this issue was recently highlighted the ABC 4 Corners Program “Mind the Gap”

BACKGROUND

A cancer diagnosis and consequent need for treatment is a shock to most people. Information provided verbally in this unfamiliar and stressful situation can be difficult to absorb and retain. Good decision making needs to be based on accessible, adequate and documented information.

After, or even mid-way through their treatment, patients often express regret that they did not have prior, clear, written information about their treatment options and out-of-pocket “gap” payments. Many cancer patients with private health insurance feel they are fully or almost fully covered. Consequences can be devastating for individuals and families experiencing financial hardship. This includes options for public or private treatment and details of all associated costs such as those related to surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and other cancer treatments decisions.

AIM

Cancer Voices Australia recommends that people diagnosed with cancer are provided with:

1. Clear documentation indicating any out-of-pocket costs, together with their treatment options in order to provide Informed financial consent prior to any cancer treatment commencing.
2. A navigator mechanism is developed to provide the ability to shop around and quickly obtain quotes.
3. That specialists fees and cost gaps are published.
4. GP's referring people to specialists communicate that there may be treatment choices and variations in gap costs which they have a right to request.

OBJECTIVES/STRATEGIES

1. Facilitate consumer participation to have a voice
2. Influence decision making
3. Consumer participation in outcomes

ACTIONS

- Correspond with the federal Minister for Health and federal Shadow Minister for Health
- Identify opportunities to communicate issue to MP's
- Communicate with the Australian Chief Medical Officer
- Meet with other consumer advocacy groups to lobby issue

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

- Minister for Health; Shadow Minister for Health
- Federal Chief Medical Officer
- Cancer Australia
- Medical Association of Australia
- Cancer Institute
- Health Consumers NSW