

Better patient consultation needed on health tech funding

April 13 2015, by Kate Bourne

Research from the University of Adelaide has highlighted the need for improved consultation with patient advocacy groups about public health funding for new medical technologies.

Such technologies can range from new drugs and vaccines, physical devices – a new surgical robot, or prosthetic limbs – and even new techniques and services used to deliver [health care](#).

Patient groups have the opportunity to comment on the assessment of these technologies to Federal Government committees, helping to advise on whether they should be publicly funded.

Researchers in the University's School of Population Health conducted a study of [patient groups](#) and committee members involved in the advisory process.

"New medical technologies offer additional treatment hopes to patients across all fields of [health](#) and medicine, but they also represent a major financial outlay either for the patient or the public purse, which is why such consultation processes are important for decision-making," says lead author Dr Jackie Street, Senior Lecturer in Public Health at the University of Adelaide.

"There has also been a change in how patients approach their health care, from passive recipients of services to active partners in their own disease management. This has produced a class of [patients](#) capable and

motivated to engage in funding decisions that impact on their own treatment," she says.

Dr Street says the research demonstrated some shortfalls in the consultation process. "Many patient organisations have expressed that they have yet to become truly active partners in decisions that affect the treatments available to them," Dr Street says.

"Barriers to good consultation include a perceived lack of transparency about the process and the information being provided, tight response deadlines, and inadequate representation from a range of patient stakeholders.

"The groups we interviewed suggested that increasing the number of patient organisations for consultation, and including them at different stages of the decision-making process – especially earlier in the process – would help to improve patient participation.

"Federal Government advisory committee members included in this study also expressed the need for improving patient involvement," she says.

Dr Street says the research hopes to support the development of effective public engagement. "Being able to involve patient groups in a meaningful way is critical to the success of these consultations," she says. "Governments around the world struggle with this issue."

More information: "Involving patients in health technology funding decisions: stakeholder perspectives on processes used in Australia." *Health Expectations*. doi: 10.1111/hex.12356

Provided by University of Adelaide

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