

AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

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Commission releases online module aimed at improving communication of risk

An e-module to help clinicians develop their skills in communicating risks and benefits with their patients has been made freely available to all clinicians today.

The module, *Helping Patients Make Informed Decisions: Communicating benefits and risks* promotes shared decision making and risk communication in practice. It is currently available to members of some specialist colleges via their learning management systems.

'Shared decision making underpins patient-centred care, which is a key dimension of safety and quality in health care,' said Dr Robert Herkes, Commission Clinical Director.

The Commission has made the module open access because clinicians need to provide relevant and clear information about treatment options, including the potential benefits, risks, trade-offs and uncertainties of each option, to ensure patients can be actively involved in decisions about their health care.

'Clinicians need to communicate information about risk to patients on a daily basis,' Dr Herkes said. 'And while communicating risks requires analysing and conveying complex information, few clinicians have training in how to do it effectively.'

Helping Patients Make Informed Decisions: Communicating benefits and risks has been developed by the Commission in conjunction with specialist colleges, education experts and medical writers, and it has been user-tested with clinicians. The module is designed to help clinicians communicate risks and benefits, including complex statistical information, so that their patient can participate more fully in decision making about their health care.

'Health decisions often have no single "best choice," so patients, and their carers, often need to make complex decisions and choose from multiple options.' Dr Herkes said.

Best practice shared decision making is based on information that not only reflects the best available evidence but also takes into account the personal opinions, preferences, values and priorities of patients.

In addition to the module the Commission has released three short videos for clinicians on shared decision making. One provides an overview on shared decision making, the second challenges myths about shared decision making in practice and the third explains how to use patient decision aids and where to find them.

The module and the videos are now freely accessible to all clinicians online. Go to www.safetyandquality.gov.au/communicatingrisk

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About the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is an Australian Government agency that leads and coordinates national improvements in the safety and quality of health care based on the best available evidence. The Commission works in partnership with the Australian Government, state and territory governments and the private sector to achieve a safe and high-quality, sustainable health system. In doing so, the Commission also works closely with patients, carers, clinicians, managers, policymakers and healthcare organisations.