

The Role of Consumer Representatives in CARI

A Consumer Representative has been defined as: "A member of a committee, steering group or similar, who voices the consumer perspective and takes part in the decision-making process on behalf of consumers. This person is usually nominated by an organisation of consumers and is accountable to them."¹

The role of a Consumer Representative involves:

- protecting consumer interests
- presenting consumer views on issues
- contributing concerns and experiences on behalf of consumers
- ensuring that CARI recognises the concerns of consumers
- ensuring accountability to consumers by CARI
- looking out for issues that may affect consumers
- being responsive to consumer groups, and
- providing information about relevant issues that concern consumers.

CARI values the participation of consumers in the guideline development process. We realise it is important that consumers have an equal part in developing the CARI guidelines and that their role in the development process is not underestimated, as the guidelines affect consumers most of all.

By involving consumers in the guideline process, we are helping to build a relationship between guideline writers and consumers. Consumers and guideline writers working together, help ensure that ethical and practical guidelines are developed. Consumers also have a very unique and focused view of the guidelines which can add value to CARI's planning and evaluation of guideline development, by presenting a view which may otherwise have not been considered.

CARI involves consumers in the guideline process by including them in the CARI Steering Committee, Guideline Groups and the external reviewing of draft guidelines, when they are posted to the CARI website and members of consumer organisations are invited to comment.

By the involvement of consumers, relevant questions are asked that relate to patient needs, thus potentially contributing to better health and treatment outcomes.

Consumers also benefit by being involved in CARI as they have an opportunity to have their say about the needs of the community.

Reference

1. National Health & Medical Research Council / Consumers' Health Forum of Australia. Statement on consumer and community participation in health and medical research. Canberra (Australia): AusInfo; 2001.