

# Empowering and Educating Mental Health Consumers

## A “Snowballing” Approach to Medicines Information Provision

A. Stashynsky (Senior Pharmacist – Medication Safety and Antimicrobial Stewardship, Mental Health)  
 Email: Amy.Stashynsky@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

### Background/ Introduction

The South Western Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Service provides care for thousands of Mental Health Consumers. These consumers are inpatients and outpatients who access Mental Health Services across a vast catchment area and at multiple different sites.

A need for increased provision of medicines information and education to consumers across the service was identified. A novel strategy to accomplish this was developed. The new strategy was required to include as many consumers as possible. It was to be facilitated by clinicians working within the multidisciplinary health care team and applicable to inpatient and outpatient settings.

### Methods

The Area Mental Health Senior Pharmacist designed a medication information card game, called “How well do you know your medicines?” Consumers take turns picking question cards. The group and facilitator assist with answering questions if needed and open discussion ensues. Questions are listed below. ❄️

A facilitator booklet was created with standardised, referenced answers. A “snowball effect” occurs because the pharmacist runs one group, observed and assisted by Nurses and Occupational therapists. These staff members then facilitate future groups at their location, training more staff to run groups each time. Facilitators use the prepared booklet, which contains full instructions and specifies that facilitators only provide additional information within their knowledge and scope of practice.

The open nature of the group discussion means more complex individual questions may surface. Facilitators are trained to note these and follow up appropriately, for example, by arranging individual medication counselling with the ward Pharmacist or a Registrar. The Area Pharmacist remains available for support. The facilitator booklet contains master copies of attendance sheets and participant feedback forms which are submitted to the Area Pharmacist after groups for records and analysis.

### Results / Discussion

Within the four month period following the initial design of this strategy:

- The group had taken place at eight different sites across the South Western Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Service, in inpatient and outpatient settings.
- Many Pharmacists, Nurses and Occupational therapists were trained in facilitation.
- The group had run eighteen times and included a total of 142 consumer participants.
- The smallest group was comprised of four consumers, the largest fourteen.
- The most common answers to “Did you learn anything new today? If so, please list:” in the consumer participant feedback results were:
  - “To keep a list of all of your medications”
  - “To ask your pharmacist more questions about medications”
  - “What ‘generic’ means”
  - “A lot!” / “All about my medications”
- The most common responses to “Do you have any suggestions for improvement for this session?” in the consumer participant feedback results were:
  - “Do more sessions” / “Have more time for sessions”
  - “Confidential sessions afterwards to go into more depth”

The implementation of this approach to increasing mental health consumer medicines education provision across the district has been successful thus far. The Pharmacist will continue to drive its establishment and monitor its effectiveness. There is no end point to this strategy, it can remain in place indefinitely and even expand. A second facilitator manual and card game in the same format is planned for 2018 with the theme “How well do you know your NRT?” Further options for potential future topics are virtually limitless. The format could also be applicable to staff education and inservice material development.

*97% of participants enjoyed the group  
 94% of participants found the group useful  
 92% of participants reported learning something new*

Why do medications often have more than one name?	If you are having trouble swallowing a tablet, can you crush or chew it?	What if your medication has gone out of date? Can you still take it?	Why should you keep a list of all of your medications?	Are you having side effects from your current medication? If you are, how do you manage them?	What is your best quality?	If you feel well or you feel better, should you stop taking your medication?	What is something you are looking forward to at the moment?
 Health South Western Sydney Local Health District	How long do medications take to start working?	If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?	What strategies could you use to remember to take your medication?	What if you miss a dose of your medication?	TRUE OR FALSE? Herbal medicines do not interact with prescription medicines because they are natural	If you have a question about your medication, who should you ask?	Do you know the names of each of your medications?