

Checklist for assessing written consumer health information

Consumer, carer and community participation

A tool to aid health services in developing written consumer health information

This checklist is to assist health practitioners who are assessing the quality of written consumer health information.¹ Sections A, B and C are relevant to all such information. Section D is relevant to products, such as pamphlets, that aim to help patients/clients/consumers/residents make decisions about their treatment and ongoing health care.

Section A Presentation

Is the print legible?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is it appropriate for the intended consumer group?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the information presented in sections?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the sections have clear headings?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there suitable spacing between the individual sentences?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there suitable spacing between sections?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do the diagrams included provide useful information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Are the diagrams labelled?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Are the diagrams of an adequate size?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

Section B Language

Is the language and tone used non-judgmental?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the language used likely to be understood by the consumers who use it?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the medical terminology, abbreviations, and jargon explained?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is it written in the second person (for example, 'you' instead of 'the patient')?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the terminology used consistent? (that is, are the same words used to describe the same ideas, procedures or terms?)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the product avoid the use of global imperatives? (for example, will, should, must)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

¹ Currie K, Spink J and Rajendran M 2000, *Well-written health information: A guide. Communicating with consumers series volume 1*. Victorian Government Department of Human Services, Melbourne, viewed 1 March 2011, <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/consumer/pubs/written.htm>

Section C Content

Is there evidence that consumers were involved in the production of the written consumer health information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the aims or objectives of the product clearly stated?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the intended audience clearly stated in the product?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the product meet the specified aims?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is information presented in a sequence that is useful to consumers, that is, is the most useful information presented first? (This may not necessarily be a logical sequence)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the information included in the product current?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the evidence provided in the product referenced?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the information presented in a balanced and non-biased way?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any omissions that the consumer needs to be aware of?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the product provide information about areas of uncertainties in knowledge?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Has information about further sources of support and help been included?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the publisher included on the product?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the date of publication included?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the product contain the name or names of the author/s?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the credentials of the authors included?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the product encourage and support shared decision making or assist consumers to ask questions about their own treatment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

The following section is only relevant to written consumer health information that aims to help patients make decisions about their treatment.

Section D Treatment Options and Outcomes

Are all the treatment options included?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a description of all the treatment options?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there an indication of the quality and level of evidence to support these options?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are treatment outcomes provided, including information about the risks and benefits?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the treatment outcomes quantified?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a comparative analysis of the treatment choices?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a balanced and unbiased description of the treatment options and outcomes?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there mention of what might happen if the no treatment option is selected?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is information about the gaps and uncertainties in treatment provided?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Unsure <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

Using the checklist to report on standard 3 and indicator 3.1 of *Doing it with us not for us: Strategic direction 2010-13*

Standard 3

Consumers, and, where appropriate, carers are provided with evidence-based, accessible information to support key decision-making along the continuum of care²

Indicator 3.1 Target for all is 85%

Services rated "Yes" on at least 30 items of the *Checklist for Assessing Written Consumer Health Information* (Currie et al 2000); including at least five for section D when using this section.

Numerator: Number of new information resources produced, revised or adopted over last year which met at least 30 of the 40 items on the Checklist for Assessing Written Consumer Health Information; including at least 5 items from section D when using this section)*

Denominator: The total number of new consumer, carer or community information resources produced, revised or adopted in the last year.

**Nb. Reduce the number of items by those relevant to the checklist process to your item of information. For example, if section D is not relevant reduce by nine items (21 of the 31 items). If any of the N/A boxes are ticked reduce by the corresponding number of items.*

² Department of Health 2009, *Doing it with us not for us: Strategic direction 2010-13*. Victorian Government Department of Health, Melbourne. Viewed 1 March 2011, http://www.health.vic.gov.au/consumer/downloads/strategic_direction_2010-13.pdf