

# Helping consumers 'mind their medicines'

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# Acknowledgement of country

We pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land.

We extend our respect to Elders, past and present, and future leaders, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# Who we are

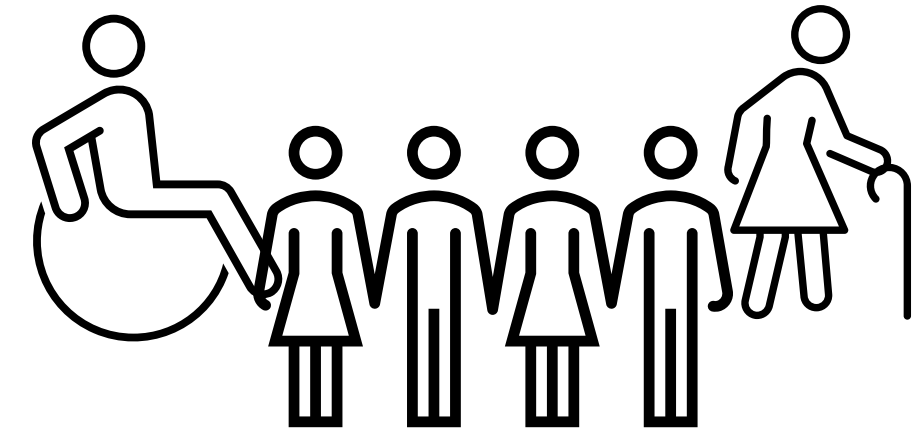
- Work with consumers, carers and communities
- Support the safe and effective use of medicines
- Help people to 'mind their medicines'.



# Learning Objectives

- Recognise the impact that poor medicines literacy has on person's health outcomes.
- Describe common consumer misconceptions about medicines.
- Recognise the key information that consumers should know about their medicines.
- Discuss the importance of utilising trustworthy information sources about medicines with consumers.

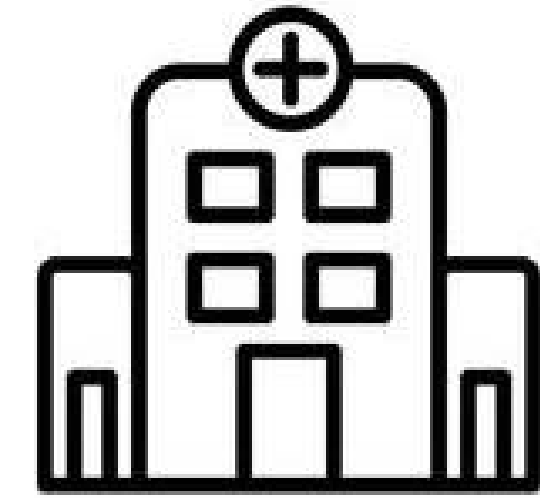
# What is health literacy?



## **Personal** health literacy

- how people can **find** and **understand** information about health and health care
- how they **apply** that information to their lives
- use it to **make decisions** and **act** on it, for themselves and others.<sup>1,2</sup>

# What is health literacy?



## **Organisational** health literacy

An organisation's commitment to equitably enable individuals to **find, understand,** and **use** information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.<sup>1</sup>

# Organisational health literacy?



An organisation that is **easy** for people to access, navigate, understand and use.

Where patients can:

- **Understand** what services are available and access them
- **Navigate** physical buildings, website and systems to receive care they need
- **Read and understand** written information provided
- **Understand and act** on verbal conversations with clinicians

# Why is health literacy important?

- Making informed decisions
- Navigating the health system
- Managing chronic conditions
- Preventing health problems
- Reducing health care costs

# What's happening in Australia?

- 1 in 7 people do not feel they could make sense of health information.
- 2/3 of Australians do not find it always easy to discuss health concerns and actively engage with their healthcare providers

# Impact

Low individual health literacy is associated with:

- Poorer health status and outcomes
- Higher use of Emergency departments and hospitalisation rates
- Lower use of preventative screening and vaccine uptake
- Reduced ability to interpret labels and health messages
- Reduced ability to take medicines properly

# What is medicines literacy?

It is the ability to **access, understand, communicate, and apply** information about medicines.

With sufficient medicines literacy people can:

- interpret medicine dosing and measurements
- read labels and understand instructions
- act if they have missed dose or have side effects
- follow a treatment plan.

# What's happening in Australia?

- Less than half knew what an **active ingredient** was.
- One-third knew the active ingredients in their own medicines.
- Keeping a **medicines list** was not common.
- Many did not know key safety aspects
  - safe disposal
  - taking medicines after the expiry date
  - sharing prescribed medicines with others.



# Consumer misunderstandings

- Brand-name medicines are best
- Stop medicines early
- Medicines are always the answer
- Natural medicines are safe

→ relates to medicines literacy

# Brand names are best

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“ What about generics?  
Are they any good?”



# Active ingredients

- Do your patients know their active ingredient?
- How do you refer to the medicines prescribed – brand or active ingredient?



# Medicines are always the answer

- Do they really need it?
- Do they want it?
- Can they afford it?
  - Time
  - \$
  - Emotional energy



# Natural medicines are safe

It's natural, so it's safe – that's right isn't it?

Natural medicines are not without risks.

Explain:

- Risk of interactions and side effects
- Allergic reactions
- Overdose



St John's wort

# What can you do

# Keeping a medicines list

- Why complete a list
- Keeping the list up to date
- Encouraging sharing
- Keeping a copy on hand





# Where to go for information

Talking is key

- Encourage people to talk with their health professional
- Other sources
  - Online
  - Medicines Line  
1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

# Understanding the quality of a website

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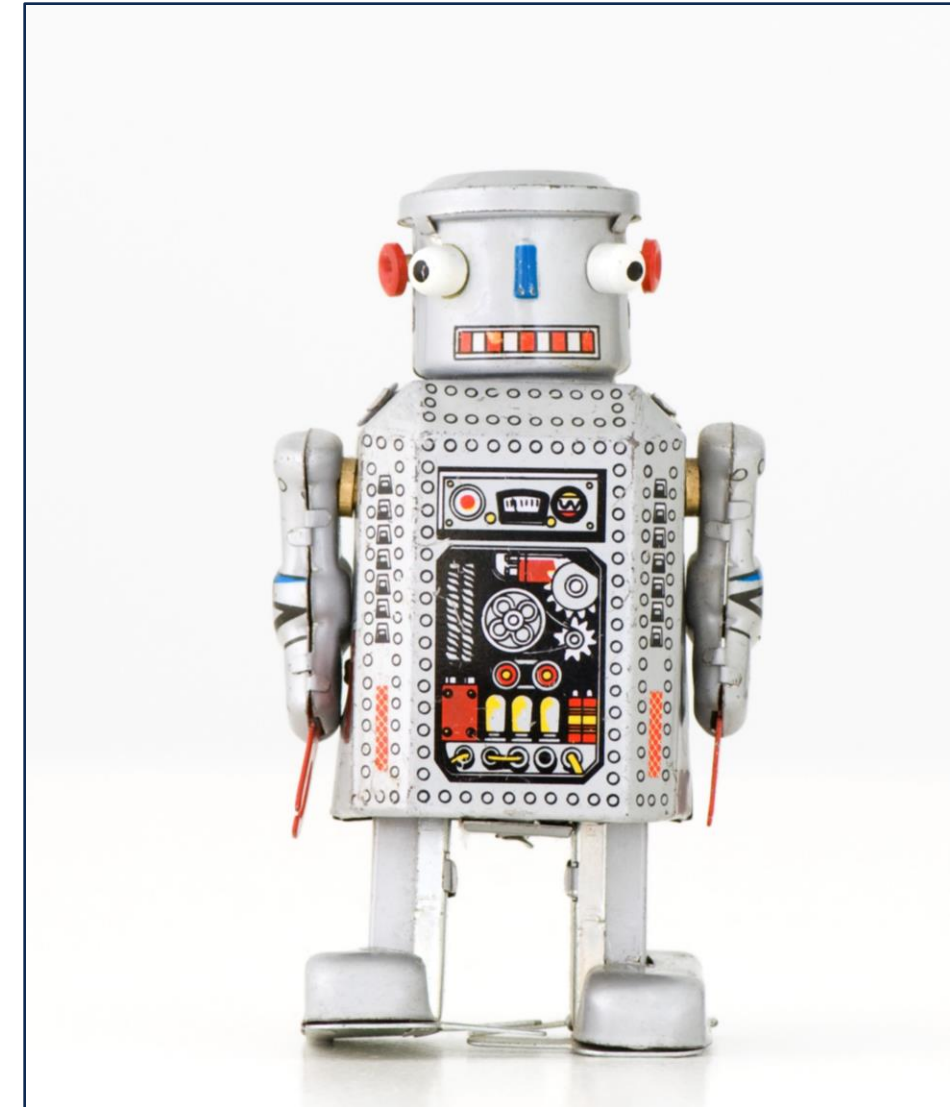
1. Who is providing the information?
2. Is the information biased?
3. Does it promise too much?
4. Is the information up to date?
5. Are the links of good quality?



# What about AI generated information

## Potential risks

- Inaccurate Information
- Lack of context
- Bias



# The Elle case

- One person's experience
- Reliability
- Sell product
- Promises too much



# Talking effectively

- Use language that is easy to understand
- Encourage questions
- Check that the person has understood what you have said
- Ask patients to repeat back in their own words
- Provide written information
- Engage in shared decision-making and planning
- Follow-up

# Providing information – tips

- Be positive
- Clear and simple language
- Visual aids
- Make important information stand out
- Interactive engagement
- Cultural sensitivity

'Don't leave  
without  
telling us'

Please tell us if  
you need to leave  
for any reason

# Summary

- People are people and will make their own choices
- Include the 'why'
- Never overestimate
- Consider the simple stuff
- What do you do in another situation?

# Where to go for further information



# Thank you

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[www.medicinesed.com.au](http://www.medicinesed.com.au)

