



MEDIA RELEASE

Experts and health consumers urge the backing of cancer care navigation solutions

Monday 6 February 2023: A unified approach to cancer care navigation is needed to ensure efficient and equitable support for patients regardless of cancer type, demographic or location. This is the message that has been delivered by experts who gathered for the [All.Can Australia webinar, Delivering accessible cancer care: Breaking down silos to deliver better navigation](#).

All.Can Australia is part of a global initiative that exists to mobilise people with cancer, healthcare professionals, industry partners and other key stakeholders across health services and the broader health system to improve outcomes in cancer care. In Australia, the organisation is led by representatives from cancer organisations, consumer advocates, biopharmaceutical industry, pharmacists and university faculties.

The Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care, opened the webinar by expressing the importance of navigation being part of the National Cancer Plan. He stated, "We need to find ways and learn lessons to build modern systems to connect the different parts of healthcare in Australia to provide a better response to non-communicable diseases, and cancer is at the top of this government's list."

"A central part of The National Cancer Plan is navigation. The truth is, navigation across our health system is patchy and fragmented, and in some ways, it is not sufficiently stepped to ensure patients are able to access a level of support that is appropriate to their needs. It is quite variable across the different cancer types, and I know that's something that All.Can is focused on and their contribution to that challenge will be important," said Minister Butler.

The webinar was facilitated by broadcast journalist, speaker and author, Sophie Scott, who spoke to an eminent panel of cancer sector experts about the critical need to improve the way patients navigate through Australia's complex health system.

Key opinions raised during the webinar pointed to the benefits of breaking down silos in the way patients receive guidance and information from the point of diagnosis to after cancer treatment.

According to **Professor Dorothy Keefe PSM MD, CEO of Cancer Australia**, patient navigation needs to form the centrepiece to our efforts to have world class cancer control in Australia.

"I have personal reasons for being interested in cancer navigation. When I was looking after my own mother as she died from breast cancer, I found it almost impossible to acquire the services I needed and I'm a medical oncologist and I had a senior nurse with me," said Professor Keefe.

"The point of the Australian Cancer Plan is to put the patients and their carers, community, significant people at the centre using the optimal care pathways to enhance the delivery of cancer care, and to concentrate on those populations and people that we know are not doing as well as others. We don't want a once-size-fits-all, we want a navigation system that is tailored to the individual patient to enable everybody to have the same outcome."



Dr Susannah Morris, Health consumer advocate and representative, reiterated that her personal experience with cancer confirms that navigation should be about how health consumers are able to move between providers to access services that meet their needs.

“From my perspective, I was lucky that I was diagnosed with a cancer with a good survival rate and had many sources of support. I live in a metropolitan area, my first language is English, I have the financial and social capacity to express my needs, and I have a working knowledge of healthcare systems. Yet, I still found that navigating the winding road of cancer care was hard,” said Dr Morris.

“Navigation needs to be considered right at the beginning with diagnosis. Navigators are important, but we need to have everyone involved in the process, including primary care, allied health professionals, imaging centres, the whole works.”

Jo Glover, Program Director of Cancer Services at Central Adelaide Local Health Network, shared details about the “Cancer Concierge” program that effectively is trialling a new concept for inpatient cancer services at Royal Adelaide Hospital to drive better connection and patient empowerment.

“The Cancer Concierge is a service co-led and co-designed with consumer representatives. Within 24 hours of admission, every patient is greeted by our Cancer Concierge, who will take them through how to use our recently introduced digital tool, Personify,” said Ms Glover.

“If a patient needs something, they can message the Concierge through a messaging function and get a response quite quickly. The idea is to take as much stress as possible out of an inpatient stay.”

Associate Professor Louise Nott, a Medical Oncologist at Icon Cancer Centre in Hobart, discussed the clinical implications of navigation and how improvements in this area can lead to shared benefits related to access, continuity of care, effectiveness and overall health outcomes.

“We’ve heard so much about the potentials of navigation and I have no doubt that if there was a central, equitable care coordination, it would better assist patients to navigate various providers and give them some empowerment back in the system,” said Professor Nott.

All.Can Australia continues to advocate for the implementation of Australia’s first national broad cancer care navigation model. The pilot approach addresses the key issues raised at the webinar has been designed to provide guidance to all cancer patients - regardless of cancer type, patient demographic or location – as they go through the health system.

By piloting an approach in one location, there is the opportunity to gather robust data to shape the possibility of a national roll-out of the program.

Professor Christobel Saunders, Co-Chair of All.Can Australia and Vice-President of All.Can International, reiterated during the webinar that a shared approach to navigation in Australia is the pathway to equitable access to cancer services.

“We need to do something concrete to improve the patient experience in our health system. We need a model that knits together the services that already exist,” said Professor Saunders.

“All.Can Australia in partnership with Healthcare Management Advisors have developed a pan-cancer care navigation model that can help achieve equity of outcomes for all cancer patients. We are looking forward to continue working with the government to pilot the model to see the real-world benefits it can deliver.”



The All.Can Australia webinar was made possible through sponsorship from MSD and Bristol Myers Squibb.

To watch the webinar on-demand, visit <https://events.golive.com.au/88ec5dcf-d065-4fe5-ac52-105a34e98268/all.can#livestream>

To stay up-to-date with All.Can Australia, check out the [website](#) for updates and join the conversations on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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About All.Can

All.Can is an international, multi-stakeholder initiative involving patients, clinical, academic and industry experts, as well as policymakers. All.Can aims to help define better solutions for sustainable cancer care and improve patient outcomes in the future. All.Can is made possible with financial support from Bristol-Myers Squibb (main sponsor), Amgen, MSD and Johnson & Johnson (sponsors) and Varian (contributor), with additional non-financial (in kind) support from Intacare and Goings-On.

The All.Can Australia initiative has received funding from Bristol Myers Squibb and the pharmaceutical industry.

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