

To QR or not QR?

A study of consumer ability to obtain electronic versions of Consumer Medicines Information leaflets

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www.tga.gov.au/products/australian-register-therapeutic-goods-artg



Aim

To assess consumer ability to obtain an electronic CMI (eCMI) using a QR code when provided with written instructions, and verbal and hands on support.



Method

This was a prospective study conducted at 3 acute Melbourne hospitals in August 2021. Four RMIT Pharmacy Honours students* assisted with the study.

English-speaking consumers prescribed new medication(s) during inpatient admission, were invited to participate.

Consumers were provided a demonstration, followed by written instructions on how to obtain an eCMI with their own electronic device (e.g. smartphone, tablet device) using a QR code linked to the Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA) website. Verbal and hands on support was available if requested during the consumer's attempt to obtain the eCMI. We recorded consumer ability to complete the steps required on an assessment tool.

Consumer were then asked about their confidence with the process and acceptability of eCMIs.



Results

Seventy-five patients agreed to participate, and while 70% reported familiarity with QR codes, only 34 (45%) had a suitable device (one with inbuilt camera and internet access) for self attempt. Figure 1 summarises their characteristics. Consumer ability to complete discrete steps in obtaining the eCMI are shown in Figure 2 and their preference and likelihood of using eCMIs in the future is shown in Figure 3.

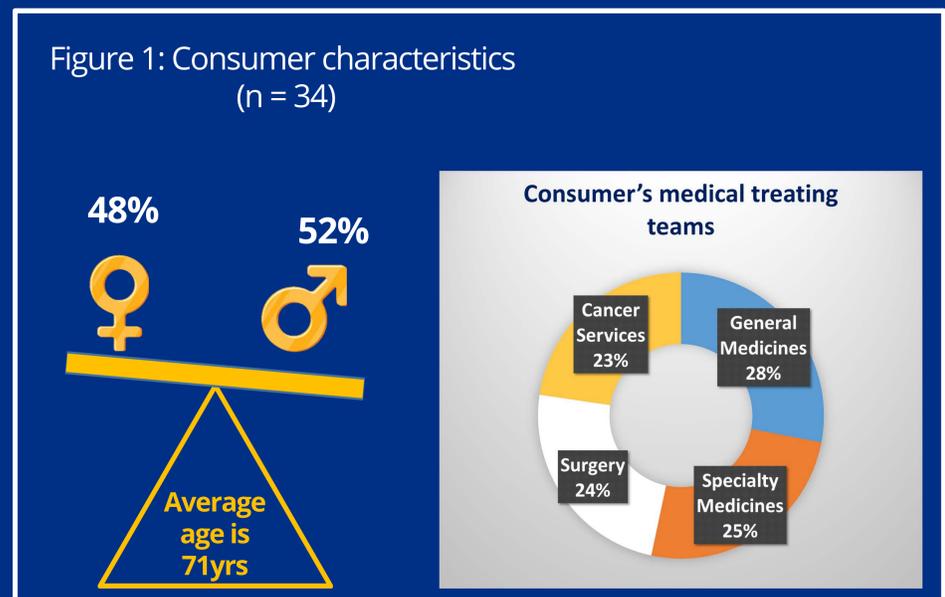


Figure 2

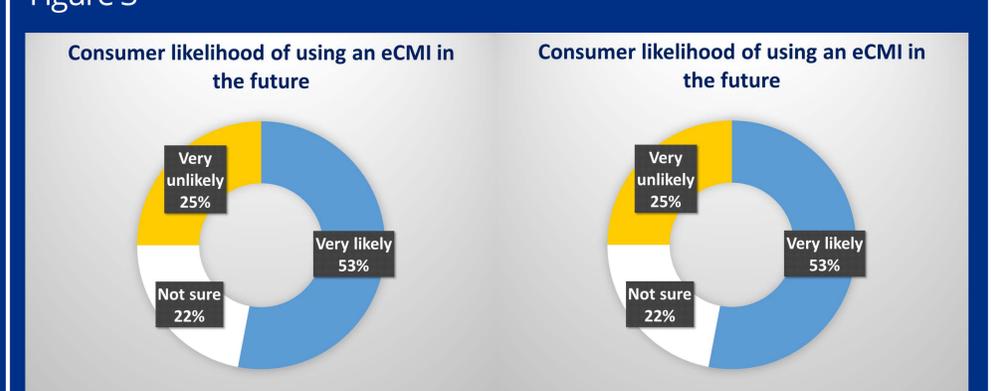


Discussion and future plans

Our study showed that healthcare consumers have good awareness of "QR codes" and some have appropriate access to devices to obtain eCMIs. With appropriate verbal and written instructions, many consumers can utilise a QR code to get the relevant CMI, although some required further assistance. This provides an opportunity for consumers and health care organisations in improving information access and also meeting environmental impacts of printed paperwork.

Our organisation is working on adding this QR code to hospital documentation as a complimentary form or alternative to printed CMIs provided in hospital.

Figure 3



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