THE HEALTH SYSTEM

The Health system is large and complicated and relies on people knowing what they want from it and being able to communicate that to the right people.

For people with an intellectual disability, a family member, advocate or a professional may help with communicating and understanding how to get care and how to make sure they are satisfied with the care they get.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTH HISTORY

In order for the doctor to understand the health problems of their patients, they need:

- Details about past and present health problems
- Early life experiences of the patient and their family, including physical and psychological problems
- Copies of other health assessments
- Medication details (current and past) with details about whether they were working and the effects they are having.

It is very helpful if there is a diary of sleep habits, seizure activity, stomach or bowel problems etc to help give a clear picture.

QUESTIONS

It is helpful for people to write their questions about health and what they can do about their health, down when they are preparing for a health appointment.

Some of the forms which doctors and other health professionals use are:

- The Centre for Disability Health has useful documents for record keeping and communication (www.cddh.monash.org under Products and Resources).

BEING SATISFIED WITH HEALTH SERVICES

To have a good relationship with a doctor, a patient needs to feel they understand each other and trust each other. This might take time and sometimes it means visiting a couple of doctors until the relationship feels right.

A patient needs to feel they can ask questions about the treatment they are on, including its benefits for them and any side effects.

It is important to receive a copy of the report from the visit to the health worker or doctor, to assist in understanding and remembering the details of the visit and to pass it onto the next health worker appointment.

COMPLAINTS

Local Health Districts have channels for feedback, and assistance to enable people with intellectual disability to voice their concerns. When a patient remains dissatisfied with the hospital, its service or the staff, there are official ways to express concerns.

- Writing to the Chief Executive of the Hospital or the GP Council.
- Writing to, or calling, the Health Care Complaints Commission.
- Writing to or calling the NSW Ombudsman.

ACCESSING NSW HEALTH SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

PROF. DAVID DOSSETOR AND THE NSW ACI INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY NETWORK MODELS OF CARE SUBCOMMITTEE

THE HEALTH SYSTEM

More Assistance:

Trust and communication are important characteristics of a good health service for a patient.

A patient should feel they can discuss their concerns with their doctor or ask for another appointment with a different doctor.

Social workers, nurses, a patient advocate or patient friend or the carer support service can all assist with this.

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