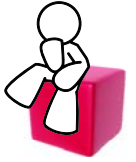


Challenges in providing the medicines information that consumers want: the evolution of *Medicine Update*

Martin O'Brien, Alice Bhasale, Craig Patterson,* Malcolm Gillies, Vanessa Simpson and Elspeth Kay.
National Prescribing Service Limited, Surry Hills, NSW, Australia.
*Australian Medicines Handbook, Adelaide, SA, Australia.



Aim: to provide information about new medicines to meet consumer needs

When we started

People were able to find important information about using a medicine safely and effectively in the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet.

But is this enough?

CMI leaflets are not designed to help people weigh up different treatment options. We asked people what information they needed when new medicines become available on the PBS.



Methods: needs analysis and consumer consultation

Challenges

- Ensuring that the new publication doesn't replicate CMI
- A tool supporting consumer decision-making about medicines
- Understanding the health literacy of the target audience
- Diversity of needs

Needs analysis

- Eight focus groups in metropolitan and regional Australia
- Made up of people with chronic conditions

Who did we consult?

- People from consumer health organisations
- People eligible for the new medicine

What we found

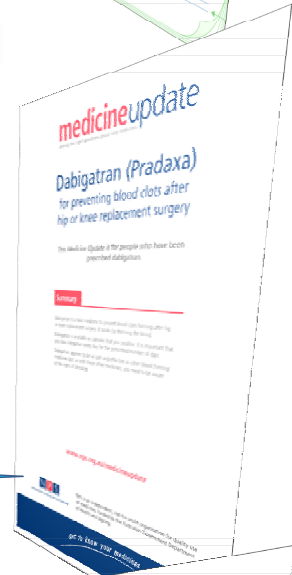
Starting points	Findings that influenced our approach
Template based on health professional information	Consumers have less context for decision-making e.g. place in therapy
Publication originally named <i>Consumer RADAR</i> to mirror health professional publication	Name did not describe the purpose or function of the publication
Focus on reasons for PBS listing	Important for people who couldn't get medicines on the PBS, less so for others

The target audience

- Consisted of people seeking information to actively participate in medicines decisions

People wanted to know about

- Side effects
- Effectiveness — will it do the job?
- Research evidence that supports claims about benefits and risks
- Cost
- How the medicine compares with others already in use

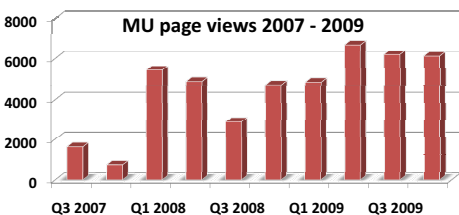


...this looks interesting - a national body, independent

Where we are now

Current process

- Published 3 times a year, online, at time of PBS listing
- Editorial group consists of consumers and health professionals
- Written using a clear, straightforward template
- User-tested for ease of understanding, and amended accordingly
- e-Alert for each issue (from May 2010)



...a good reference to come back to...

Outcomes

- Twelve *Medicine Update* articles published since 2007
- Usage increased during the period analysed
- User-testing highlights specific issues for intended audience

...it even gives you alternative help modes ... that's good that last part ... if you want to get help, help yourself



Next step

- Continue to investigate barriers and enablers to increased readership and dissemination

An independent, not-for-profit organisation for quality use of medicines, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing