

# KEY MESSAGES

## Patients' and consumers' perceptions of and involvement in safety and quality in Australian general practice

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Andrea L Hernan, Christine Walker, Amr Abou Elnour, Jeffrey Fuller, Julie K Johnson and James A Dunbar

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### Policy context

Patients and carers have an important role to play when preventing errors and reducing harm. They have firsthand experience of their care, and are often able to provide detailed information about the processes, systems and structures that have led to the occurrence of an adverse event. Furthermore, patients' views and understanding of safety and quality are valuable as they can identify issues that contribute to creating safe environments that staff or others may not recognise.

The benefits for policy advisors and primary care organisations having access to patient views of safety and reported sources of potential harm in are numerous. It would allow organisations to proactively identify areas of strength and weakness of the practice, promote future learning, and intervene to prevent errors from occurring. This kind of innovative approach is required to actively engage patients in developing safe primary care environments.

### Key messages

- > It is essential for patients and carers to be involved in the prevention of harm in Australian primary care settings. We recommend that primary care organisations be receptive to patient feedback on the safety of the service they provide. Practices already undertake routine data collection from patients and supplementing this with patient feedback on safety would be beneficial to generate a holistic understanding of the practice and be practical to implement.
- > We recommend that incorporating the patients' perspective of organisational and environmental factors that contribute to safety incidents would be the most feasible and appropriate approach in primary care.
- > Further research on the best way to capture patients' views of factors contributing to safety for practice use is advocated. Data collection from patients would need to be reflective of things practice staff could take action on and be measurable to change.
- > We recommend that primary care organisations adopt an action planning approach to implementing safety improvements based on patient feedback. The nature of this process is amenable to an already familiar and established quality improvement methodology in Australian primary care – the Australian Primary Care Collaboratives program.