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A Framework For Assessing The Impact Of Health Initiatives On Disadvantaged People Developed Through The National Health Priority Area Initiative.

Abstract

There has been a lot of concentration of effort on support and training for consumers to engage in health policy and program development as consumer representatives. However, there has been comparatively little attention paid to the development of resources to enable consumers to develop their skills at ensuring that policies and programs meet consumer needs, especially those of the disadvantaged.

The National Health Priority Action Council (NHPAC) oversees or works closely with programs in the seven national health priority areas: arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, injury prevention and mental health. Among the Council's priorities in its own activities are to ensure that consumers are central to its work and that programs are developed which can enable consumers to participate more actively in their own health. A Consumer Network within the Council supports consumers at the national level, and seeks to increase the ability of consumers and the National Health Priority Area initiative to meet its aims, particularly in consumer participation.

One of the initiatives of the NHPAC Consumer Network has been the development of a framework to enable consumers to assess the potential impact on consumers of proposals for health programs and initiatives. This includes techniques to help gauge who is likely to benefit, who is likely to lose or miss out, and how a proposal may affect different population groups.

The need for a framework was identified by the Network at its first annual workshop in 2002. For its second workshop in March 2003, a variety of frameworks used in areas such as environmental impact and impact assessment of policy proposals on Indigenous peoples were gathered and considered by the group. A draft framework and accompanying resources were developed, working closely with the Network and in discussion with representatives of people from a variety of population groups.

This paper will present the framework and the supporting educational resources, including examples of its use with proposals within the National Health Priority Areas. The predictive value of the framework will also be assessed by applying the technique to the proposals of programs which have been implemented, with evaluations demonstrating the impact of those programs on different population groups. Progress on this element of the project will be reported.

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