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# Using Community Pharmacies to increase participation in bowel and breast screening

Initiative Type

Research

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Close

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## Summary

Promoting cancer screening in community pharmacies is feasible, provided barriers such as funding, privacy and follow-up are addressed. Pharmacies are accessible and pharmacists have trusting

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relationships with community members which makes community pharmacies an ideal setting.

## Key dates

Jan 2016

Jun 2017

## Implementation sites

Metro South Hospital and Health Service

## Partnerships

Cancer Screening Unit - Preventive Health Branch (DoH), Metro South Hospital and Health Service, QUT School of Public Health and Social Work, The Pharmacy Guild of Australia – Queensland Branch, Brisbane South Primary Health Network

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## **Aim**

To identify the feasibility of the promotion and education of cancer screening in community pharmacies. Research Questions: 1. What is the current knowledge, self-efficacy and capacity of community pharmacists practicing in the Metro South HHS catchment, in relation to discussing and promoting bowel and breast cancer screening with their customers (including the enablers and barrier they perceive)? 2. What are consumers' views about receiving bowel and breast cancer screening information in community pharmacy settings?

## **Benefits**

The findings from this research provides the evidence base for and guide the development of a pilot health promotion intervention in the Metro South Hospital and Health Service (HHS) catchment (with a view to rollout state-wide). It is envisaged this intervention will assist in engaging hard-to-reach priority populations, who may be at risk of cancer but less likely to participate in screening.

## **Background**

Cancer is the leading cause of disease burden in Australia. There are national screening programs for bowel cancer and breast cancer, which are effective at reducing cancer mortality and morbidity. However, participation in these programs is only moderate. Because of their accessibility, community pharmacies are one setting where bowel and breast cancer screening may be promoted.

## **Solutions Implemented**

- Mixed-method, exploratory research within Metro South HHS
- Quantitative: Electronic Survey to 27 pharmacists.
- Qualitative: In-depth, semi-structured interviews with 3 consumer key informants and 5 community pharmacists.

## **Evaluation and Results**

Surveys and interview feedback reveal that Pharmacists perceive they have a vital, valuable role in promoting cancer screening and have a moderate level of confidence and knowledge in promoting

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cancer screening. Consumer key informants perceive that communities would support the promotion of cancer screening in pharmacies and see pharmacists as having a key role in linking and referring people to other health services and filling a need in the community when the General Practitioner (GP) is too busy.

## Lessons Learnt

- Pharmacists have relatively good knowledge in relation to bowel and breast cancer but report their confidence in discussing these topics with customers as moderate.
- Pharmacists perceive 2 limitations in their current health promotion role: (1) their role focuses on individual consumers rather than a population approach, and (2) the community may not be aware of the role they play in health promotion.
- Community key informants (representing lower socioeconomic sections of the community) considered a pharmacy led health promotion program to promote cancer screening to be valuable. This was particularly because the costs of accessing GP practices and GPs were often prohibitive.
- Community key informants considered the promotion of cancer screening messages in pharmacies to be beneficial to the community. However they did identify some complexities: need for cultural tailoring of messaging/program, privacy and awareness of pharmacists role in health promotion.