



Consumer and Community Participation Fact Sheet P03: For Consumers and Community Members

Why do consumers and community members get involved in research?

There are a number of reasons that consumers and community members choose to get involved in research;

- To improve health outcomes and/or the health system.
- To give something back to research and/or health services.
- To contribute to wider community issues such as environmental health.
- To get their story heard and influence how research is done.
- To turn a negative experience into something positive.

What do consumers and community members need to consider before agreeing to be involved in the research?

Here are some questions that consumers and community members may wish to ask themselves before agreeing to get involved in the research project;

- Does the research project interest me?
- Do I feel well enough to get involved in the research project?
- Do I have the time that the research project requires?
- Do I have the confidence to speak up in front of researchers?
- Will I need training or other support to help me?
- How will I get to where the meetings are held? Will my expenses be covered or an honorarium paid?
- How will my involvement affect my other commitments?
- Do I have any conflicts of interest to declare or confidentiality issues to discuss with the researcher?
- Do I have enough information from the researcher to decide if I should get involved in this research project?

See other Fact Sheets P01 Why Involve Consumer and Community Members, T02 The Research Cycle, T03 Ladder of Participation and T04 for Further Sources of Information.



What can consumers and community members expect?

It is really important to be upfront and discuss your queries with the researcher before agreeing to be part of the research team. It is likely your involvement will require a long-term commitment. We have a number of Fact Sheets on consumer and community participation that may help you make a decision. Please read the ones that are most relevant to the project you are considering becoming involved with.

Comments from a community member on participation:

“As a consumer, I agreed to join the Steering Committee on the proviso that it would be of value. I only wanted to be involved if it was going to make a difference. I felt it worked really well - there was a good balance of researchers and consumers, and there was a commitment from everyone to make it work. There was a clear vision of what was to be done, information was transparent and our input was welcomed. My involvement was for a finite period and you could see an end to it.”
(Jackie Softly – community member)