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Philosophy, Aims, Purpose, and Policies CANCER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE

PHILOSOPHY

In the spectrum of community services there is an important role for telephone information, support and referral services. Many of the reasons why people use these services are applicable to the specialist Cancer Information and Support Service, which includes a Cancer Helpline, Cancer Connect - peer support program, Breast Care Nurse Distance Learning Program, Cancer Support Groups Program, Welfare Grants and No Interest Loans Programs and an Outside Speakers' Bureau. (*insert your programs here*).

- ◆ These services are non-stigmatising and guarantee anonymity and confidentiality for the user.
- ◆ They provide instant, reliable, up-to-date resources for people with specific questions.
- ◆ Information seeking has been established as a coping strategy for people in vulnerable situations. Research suggests that there is real value to patients and their families in seeking information about cancer and relevant issues.
- ◆ They provide an opportunity to explore further the availability of professional and peer care and support systems.
- ◆ By acting as 'a sounding board' or reassurance, telephone counselling may obviate the need for further professional assistance.
- ◆ They provide individuals with access to up-to-date information about minimising personal cancer risks.
- ◆ They offer linkage with a trained pool of informal support people, who can provide empathy and peer support at a time most needed

AIMS

One aim of the Organisation is to provide information, support and advice. The Organisation's Cancer Information and Support Service has been established as one means of achieving that aim.

Specifically, the aim of the specialised Cancer Information and Support Service will be to provide information, referral and counselling about cancer to anyone in the community who feel they need it. The request may be in the form of telephone, email or written enquiry, or an enquiry in person. The enquiries include questions about cancer prevention, early detection, and all aspects of the cancer experience for patient and family.

A major aim is to improve and expand the Cancer Connect Program within the State of Victoria. The recommendations from the "Evaluation of the Breast Cancer Support Service" which was done by the Centre for Behavioural Research and completed in 1994 have been implemented.

The Cancer Connect program will be promoted, volunteers will be specially recruited and hospitals will be targeted to designated Accredited/Breast Cancer Support Nurses for

those with breast cancer and Cancer Support Service Nurses and Prostate Care Nurses for those with other types of cancer. The education program for both nurses and volunteers has been improved and an accreditation program for both Breast Care Nurses and Cancer Connect volunteers has been set in place.

To achieve these aims, the Cancer Information and Support Service will provide good quality, up-to-date information appropriate to the needs and interests of the user. We will also ensure that staff and volunteers receive ongoing training regarding the latest information and techniques necessary for providing counselling and support for those affected by cancer.

Cancer Information and Support Service will continue as a specialist service for the general population and will provide a state-wide service. It will actively promote its role as a resource for other State Cancer Councils, the National Breast Cancer Centre, National Cancer Control Institute and other cancer organisations, both national and international, Victorian generalist information networks, including regional services and will actively contribute to training programs for generalist services, cancer support groups and other specialist cancer services.

The Cancer Information and Support Service hours of operation are between 8:30am - 8:00pm weekdays and 9am-5pm Saturdays, by a range of staff trained to provide the desired service. Outside these hours, particularly on Sundays, an emergency on-call backup service will be available. The Cancer Support Group Program Coordinator will be required to visit groups and attend meetings as required.

The performance of the Cancer Information and Support Service will be evaluated against these aims.

PURPOSE AND POLICIES

The Cancer Information and Support Service is often the first point of contact for many residents of the State of Victoria with The Cancer Council Victoria and has been funded by grants from the William Buckland Foundation, the Myer Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation, the Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Esso, the NRMA Insurance Co, and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. A great deal of thought and effort has gone into establishing it in a way that will be of most benefit to the residents of the State of Victoria.

The Cancer Information and Support Service has two levels of responsibility:

The Support component, which includes Cancer Support Groups and the Cancer Connect program, provides support and assistance to patients and their families in the form of counselling, information provision and referral to appropriate resources. CISS does not refer to individual practitioners.

We do provide linkage on a one-to-one basis with specially trained Cancer Connect volunteers or with the nearest specially trained Accredited/Breast Cancer Nurse. Cancer Support Group information and linkage is offered so that peer support may be obtained if appropriate. If financial assistance is required, this may be offered in the form of a Welfare Grant which is non-repayable or a No Interest Loan which is repaid over a scheduled time. CISS also provides linkage with the nearest community resource for ongoing assistance.

The Information component:

Cancer Helpline staff provide information and literature to health professionals, patients, students, members of the general public and other departments within the Cancer Council.

ACCCIS, which is a unique, computer database provides a comprehensive, centralised listing. This database has been designed especially for use by the Cancer Councils. It contains resources which include Cancer Council Victoria and other State Cancer Council services, support groups, in-home services, community health centres, hospitals, palliative care programs, transportation, psychosocial support programs, government programs and those which provide financial assistance etc. A matching module is available, for matching women with breast cancer with an appropriate, trained volunteer. This can be used to match with trained volunteers with any specific type of cancer. Extensive information files regarding scientific papers and information on specific types of cancer, early detection, treatment and control are also maintained.

ACCCIS has been shared with other State Cancer Councils who are members of the Australian Cancer Society, and is sold commercially to other appropriate organisations eg. the Singapore National Cancer Education and Information Service, the Singapore University Hospital, Victorian Carer's Association, Australian Drug Foundation, National Heartline, etc..

A Guide to Resources in the State of Victoria for Cancer Patients is published and distributed throughout the State each year. This guide is given at no cost to patients and includes a current list of Accredited Breast Care Nurses in each state, cancer support groups, hospitals, and any community resource which is available to assist people with cancer.

Each request for information and resources, provides CISS staff with the opportunity to be of assistance in several ways. Firstly, the patient's needs may be met through direct provision of counselling and linking them up with an empathic listener. Secondly, if appropriate, a referral to the Cancer Connect program or appropriate resources within the patients own community may be made. This access to information empowers the patient at the time when they often feel most vulnerable and helpless.

The Cancer Information and Support Service, therefore, may provide the essential link between the patient and needed services.

A large advisory group of medical and paramedical specialists will be available to provide information and assist with enquiries beyond the scope of the staff. This group will not have direct patient contact, but will be available for the staff to telephone and ask advice on specific problems. They also assist with previewing medical information and articles which will be added to the information files and training for the Cancer Information and Support Service staff on their particular area of expertise.

The Cancer Information and Support Service Policies are as follows:-

1. A comprehensive database of resources will be maintained.
2. Every call will be documented to provide statistics for future program planning and for monitoring the service itself, however, anonymity will be guaranteed.

3. Questions will be answered within The Cancer Council's approved sources of information and guidelines.
4. Under no circumstances will specific medical advice be given by Cancer Information and Support Service staff or volunteers. The disclaimer should always be given to patients requesting advice.
5. Strict confidentiality is to be maintained in each case. A case may only be discussed by members of the support team or, if necessary, with a medical advisory panel member. Necessary, limited information will be shared with members of the Cancer Connect program in order to effect an appropriate linkage.
6. Endorsement of specific manufacturers or products is prohibited.
7. Recommendation of specific medical or other individual practitioners is prohibited.
8. Materials or information should only be sent to the person making the request.
9. Any problem calls or difficulties should be brought to the attention of the Director. The Director must be notified if a caller is inappropriately or repeatedly contacting the Cancer Helpline.

This will be discussed and a memo outlining the circumstances and solution decided upon will be placed in the "Incident File."

This Confidentiality Statement must be read and signed by staff and volunteers before commencement of employment or volunteer service (303.3A)

Submitted 12/05