

## Help Improve Medical Research with the WEHI Consumer Program

Have you experienced an illness or cared for someone with an illness? Sharing your experiences and valuable knowledge with scientists through the WEHI Consumer Program can enhance medical research.

WEHI is Australia's oldest medical research institute. The institute was founded in 1915 through an endowment from the Walter and Eliza Hall Trust. Philanthropy was the foundation of the Institute and ongoing support from the community has been essential to the Institute's success.

The WEHI Consumer Program was launched in 2013 to create a better link between Institute research the community with the aim to improve research by enabling Consumers to support scientific research. Through forming effective working relationships with Consumers, our researchers continue to make new discoveries that we hope to be able to translate into therapies.

### Who is a Consumer?

Consumers are members of the community who have experienced an illness, cared for someone with an illness, or have a passion to help medical researchers. Consumers provide a community perspective. Their role is to bring a broad, informed view to research projects and grant applications, reflecting their experiences and the needs of the community where appropriate.

### Why are Consumers so important?

Consumers often have valuable knowledge of the way a medical condition effects themselves, their family and friends, and the broader community that otherwise our scientists would not be aware of. When consumers partner with our scientists they can influence and enhance research at the Institute and provide a powerful voice for the communication of scientific and research issues to the community. Without consumer support, researchers would not be able to understand the practical, social, physical, and emotional sides of the medical conditions they are working to find cures for.

### What do our Consumers do?

Volunteers in the WEHI Consumer Program provide a link between the researcher and the community, as well as providing unique insight into the disease type. Consumers partner with a researcher on a project relating to their own medical condition, or around their medical interest.

#### *Consumers:*

- act as advocates for the research to the public and provide information to the community
- inspire research scientists by contributing personal life experiences
- review grant applications for research funding
- develop or review plain language summary documents for various purposes
- provide insights into how research undertaken at the Institute can make a difference in the community

## Consumer Commitments

As a Consumer volunteer you will be expected to make these basic commitments:

- to undertake support training to assist you in your Consumer experience
- to meet with your researcher four times a year for project updates and grant reviews

As well as the basic commitments, as a volunteer you may be invited to attend varied seminars, lab tours, lunches, and institute events.

## WEHI Commitments

In return for volunteering your time and insights, we will support you by committing to:

- provide ongoing support via the WEHI Consumer Program Manager
- deliver workshops for Consumer education and training
- invite Consumers to events and seminars as part of the Institute community
- no out of pocket expenses are incurred

## Join WEHI as a Consumer volunteer

WEHI is seeking Consumer volunteers who are interested in engaging with medical research scientists. If you are interested in becoming a valued part of our community, we invite you to learn more about this partnership between the community and our scientists. Our Consumer program has helped produce some amazing discoveries and resulted in dramatic improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment in the areas of cancer, immune disorders, Parkinson's disease, infectious diseases and much more.

To learn more about joining the WEHI Consumer Program please contact:

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