HAUTE AUTORITÉ DE SANTÉ

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Producing an information brochure for patients and healthcare system users

An information brochure tells patients, healthcare users and their families about the care that is being offered, and adds to the information given verbally by the healthcare professional. It is not a substitute for verbal information but can help patients and users to take part in decisions about their health.

An information brochure must be prepared by an explicit method[1] and always have a specific aim, which may vary according to the topic covered and the way the brochure is to be used (in an appointment with a doctor or ancillary medical practitioner, during a course of treatment or rehabilitation, or at home).

BROCHURE TOPICS

- **Screening**

To provide information about the purpose, benefits, possible drawbacks and procedures of screening before the person decides whether to request, accept or refuse screening.

- **Prevention**

To promote awareness of a risk factor or risk behaviour that can be avoided.

To explain how a given care procedure can help curb disease progression, and how to prevent relapses and complications.

- **Diagnostic or therapeutic strategies**

To explain the disease, the advantages and drawbacks of each treatment strategy and their foreseeable benefit/risk balance in order to help patients come to a decision.

- **Therapeutic patient education (TPE)**

To describe the steps of TPE and the aims of the sessions and activities on offer, in order to improve everyday management of a chronic disease.

- **Self-care**

To remind patients of the practitioner’s advice (treatment compliance, carrying out a given care procedure, monitoring a clinical or biochemical parameter, etc.), in order that they may adapt this advice to their situation.

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[1] This method is detailed in the methodology guide ‘How to produce an information brochure for patients and users of the healthcare system'users, which is available for download at www.has.sante.fr

THE FOUR KEY STEPS IN PRODUCING A BROCHURE

STEP 1: PREPARATION

Involve patients and users from the outset in the project and in all its steps, on a par with health professionals

- Assess the need for an information brochure and identify available documents on the topic
- Choose as first option to adapt and/or translate any available documents that are relevant and that can be transposed to the French context
- Identify the target patients/users and their needs and questions by means of surveys or meetings
- Specify the exact topic, purpose and potential users of the brochure
- Carry out searches for scientific data, regulatory documents and information brochures on the topic; evaluate the content and methodological quality of these brochures
- Choose the most appropriate format for the intended target audience (age, reading level, intended use, etc.)
- Provisionally schedule brochure updates in step with expected scientific advances
- Choose a distribution channel suited to the chosen format and to the conditions of use of the brochure (print run, cost, outlets, etc.)

STAGE 2: BROCHURE DESIGN

Set up a multidisciplinary working group (of professionals, patients, users, etc.) that will define brochure content on the basis of a literature review and patient/user surveys

- Identify the main message and key points
- Choose the format (number of pages, headings, use of graphics, etc.) and design the ‘dummy’. Text and graphics should facilitate reading and understanding
- Draft brochure content; follow guidance on writing (concision, clarity, appropriate wording, etc.) and on presentation (e.g. clearly visible paragraphs)
- Insert text and illustrations into the dummy to achieve a balanced layout

Guidance on writing

- Be objective, do not dramatise, do not be overly optimistic
- Give numerical data for disease incidence and symptoms (i.e. frequency rates)
- Describe the benefits and risks of treatment, and its impact on the patient’s daily life
- Suggest a list of questions that the patient can ask the healthcare professional
- Give sources for further information
- State: names of the authors and their sectors of activity, information sources, funding sources, and document production date

STEP 3: BROCHURE TESTING AND DISTRIBUTION

Why? Testing the brochure on patients/users reveals how content and format can be improved. Patient understanding and perception of the messages is assessed. The changes that need to be made for patients/users with special needs are identified (people with reading or comprehension difficulties or partially sighted people).

What should be tested? Patients/users are given the final draft of the brochure. They assess the amount, readability, presentation, and intelligibility of the information, the usefulness and quality of the graphics, the ease-of-use of the document, etc.

How? The draft brochure is tested in face-to-face interviews or small focus groups of 10-12 patients and/or users run by working group members or a service provider.

What then? The draft brochure is amended on the basis of the suggestions for improvement that have been made. If major changes are needed, the brochure should be retested on a new group of patients/users. The amended brochure is printed and distributed through the channels identified in step 1.

STEP 4: BROCHURE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Assess the impact of the brochure after a period of routine use to find out how far the original objectives have been met.

This assessment should cover one or more of the following:

- The target audience’s interest: has the target audience been interested in the brochure? Has the brochure met their expectations?
- The public’s awareness of the brochure’s existence and/or content: has there been sufficient media coverage? Have the distribution channels used been effective?
- The working group’s objective: Has the patient/user understood the main message and key points, and acquired the minimum amount of knowledge that was expected, and are people taking an active part in decisions concerning their health?
- The conditions of brochure use
- The brochure’s usefulness and ease-of-use: How has the brochure been used
- Overall user satisfaction (patients/users and health professionals)

WHERE AND HOW TO FIND INFORMATION

- **Data from the scientific literature**
  Look for professional guidelines and reviews of the literature
  - Search databases, consult websites
  - Check the methodological quality of the data and how comprehensive and up to date they are
- **Existing brochures on the topic**
  Check the websites of the organisations that produce them
  - Assess their methodological quality
  - Consider adapting or translating them, where appropriate
- **Needs and expectations of patients and users**
  - Organise focus groups or surveys

WHO PRODUCES PATIENT BROCHURES?

Health Technology Assessment agencies that produce clinical practice guidelines and some government bodies publish documents aimed at patients/users. For example:

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (United States): www.ahrq.gov
- FNCLCC (French Federation of Cancer Centres), Standards, Options and Recommendations ‘*Savoir Patient*’ guides: www.sor-cancer.fr
- Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- INPES (French National Institute of Prevention and Health Education): www.inpes.sante.fr
- Institut für Qualität und Wirtschaftlichkeit im Gesundheitswesen (Germany): www.informedhealthonline.com
- Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (United States): www.icsi.org
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (UK) www.nice.org.uk
- Ottawa Health Research Institute (Canada): http://decisionaid.ohri.ca
- Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (Ecosse) :
- *http://www.sign.ac.uk/patients/network.html*

MAKING A START: www.has-sante.fr

➲ See method in **“How to produce an information brochure for patients and users of the healthcare system”** (HAS, June 2008)

➲ Download the brochure **“Coping better with your asthma”** (HAS, 2007), which explains to asthma sufferers and their families the procedures and benefits of therapeutic patient education

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This quick reference guide outlines the key points of the methodology guide on ‘How to produce an information brochure for patients and users of the healthcare system' (March 2005 – updated in June 2008), which is available at **www.has.sante.fr**

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