



Te Tāhū Hauora
Health Quality & Safety
Commission

Getting involved in consumer forums

FIT for symptomatic project

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora identified an opportunity for two consumers to join a working group aimed at delivering a new test to patients who need a colonoscopy. The faecal immunochemical test (FIT) symptomatic project will decide how to introduce FIT to prioritise patients for colonoscopy, for those already on a non-urgent symptomatic waiting list and new referrals.

An expression of interest (EOI) was promoted to the consumer health forum Aotearoa members via our website and the June 2025 newsletter. The EOI described the project, the skills and experiences Health New Zealand was looking for, the makeup of members of the working group and what the consumers on the group could expect including time commitments and remuneration

One consumer was appointed to the FIT equity working group. They shared their experience of working on this project.

What was the EOI process like for you?

The process was straightforward. I saw it advertised in one of the newsletters, this is something that is close to my experience, and I applied. When you apply for these opportunities, it is about telling your own story and why it is important to you.

The project manager got in touch with me, they were so warm and welcoming – just open arms really – and that made it easy. It wasn't difficult at all.

How did the group make you feel welcome?

The first meeting was focused on introducing the working group and the project, and what the project hoped to achieve. It was a very welcoming environment; I felt comfortable. There was some information sent before the meeting but that first meeting was about introductions and that was nice.

How do you see your contribution influence the way the project progresses?

We were given four examples of letters that would be used, and it was a bit confusing. It took some time to get my head around what each of these letters was trying to say, and I thought if it was confusing for me sitting here in this group, how confusing it will be for those receiving the letters. Some of my feedback was taken on board.

I felt that the most impact I made was in the first couple of meetings. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend all the meetings and that I may have missed being involved and felt that maybe I lost connection with the progress of the project.

What is the value of having consumers on the working group?

I believe that consumers can make such a difference to health services. We can be active partners in our care, and that we must take some responsibility. I do this work to empower other people to be active in their health care.

What advice would you share with the health sector?

Where possible, codesign with consumers to develop tools and resources. When consumers are given the space to contribute the impact is more meaningful for them.

Consumer input is important and having multiple consumer members on a group provides range of experience and perspectives. Practically, having more than one consumer means if one is unable to attend a meeting, the consumer voice is still included.

The FIT for symptomatic project is ongoing. The first year of roll-out is focused on consumer and whānau voice. The project will evaluate success based on consumer and whānau feedback.