Engage Community Forums

Engage Community Forums to raise awareness of Gastro-Intestinal cancers – an initiative led by GI Cancer survivors and carers.

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Introduction:

GI cancer survivor and carer members of the GICI/AGITG Consumer Advisory Panel have been the drivers of a series of Forums to raise community awareness about gastro-intestinal cancers, treatments, clinical trials, support services and survivorship. This is known as the ‘Engage’ program.

Method:

GICI/AGITG CAP members guided the development of the Engage program, selection of speakers and relevant local contacts, groups and cancer support organisations.

GICI/AGITG staff provided the support necessary to implement the Forums.

The program to date has included expert clinician speakers on the topics of

- GI Cancer - the Big Picture,
- Latest Advancements in Research and Treatments,
- Quality of Life Research
together with a GICI/AGITG CAP or community member presenting
- Survivorship - their ‘survivorship’ experience story.

Ample time for questions was followed by an opportunity for further engagement as participants partook of refreshments and expo-style displays by organisations such as Colostomy Association, Cancer Council, Look Good Feel Better, to name but a few.

Results:

Engage Community Forums were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra and Western Sydney in 2013–2014.

838 people attended in total, and highly positive feedback was obtained.

A further series of ‘Engage’ forums in rural and regional areas during 2015–16 is supported by a Cancer Australia Supporting people with cancer Grant initiative, funded by the Australian Government. Regional forums commence in Central Qld in March 2015.

Conclusions:

Engage Community Forums are a collaboration between survivors, carers, GICI/AGITG, cancer clinicians and local communities. It is a novel model that hopefully will address regional inequalities in cancer outcomes and other local health issues, improve bowel cancer screening numbers and increase clinical trial participation.