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Research published in the February issue of the *Australian Health Review,* now available online,highlights healthcare communication as central to improved health outcomes for patients and healthcare consumers, according to the journal’s Editor-in-Chief, Professor Sonĵ Hall.

‘As an example, for a safe and effective person-centred healthcare system to work, people and their families need to have a requisite level of health literacy – that is, the knowledge, skills and understanding that enable them to make sound health decisions, said Professor Hall.

‘Often it is up to health professionals themselves to impart these elements of health literacy to patients, and yet all too often communication in the clinical setting is relegated as ‘soft skills.’

In this issue, a research team from Macquarie University reflects on the need to reposition communication as a clinical skill, one that is underpinned by education and is responsive in practice.

Another critical element of improved health outcomes is the involvement of consumers in creating, or co-designing, health care change.

‘A research team, also from Macquarie University, set out to examine the experience of co-design and its implications for the healthcare workforce.

‘It was found that diverse communication modalities, accessible materials and a range of meeting options all support participation in an inclusive design process for both consumers and the healthcare workforce.

‘The researchers advocate for system and service leadership support and resourcing of co-design initiatives that support the successful implementation of co-designed healthcare change.

‘Another study looks at the health and well-being profile of people experiencing primary homelessness at St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne. This study examined the personal well-being, and indicators of vulnerability in this population during acute hospital inpatient admission, and proposes a model of healthcare delivery that would improve health outcomes in this vulnerable population.

‘Finally, a study led by the University of Wollongong has looked at the factors related to emergency department care which led to patient deterioration after admission to hospital. The team found that the most common causal factor in patient deterioration was poor communication between staff, particularly in patients with comorbidities and in the presence of medical documentation error.

The *Australian Health Review* is the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association’s peer-reviewed academic journal, it explores major national and international health issues and questions, enabling health professionals to keep their fingers on the pulse of the nation’s health decisions and know what the most influential commentators and decision makers are thinking.