

DOHaD 2026 ABSTRACT

Engaging Australian Healthcare Consumers to Determine Priorities and Consensus for Precision Medicine Approaches to Detect Non-communicable Disease in Early Life: A Modified Delphi Study

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Background: We engaged healthcare consumers to develop a consensus, using a modified Delphi study design, for the acceptability of (1) pregnancy screening tools that would indicate a child's risk for developing non-communicable disease (NCD), and (2) targeted early interventions for those identified at a higher risk of developing NCD using precision medicine approaches. Acceptability of future research design and conduct, as well as the implications for implementation into routine healthcare, were discussed. Participants also ranked the NCD they believed were of most importance for research focus, in line with recent calls for better involvement of healthcare consumers in setting research questions and defining priority areas.

Methods: A modified two-stage Delphi study, including an in-person consumer workshop (stage 1) and online follow-up survey (stage 2), was used to evaluate consumer consensus for research to develop precision medicine tools for early detection and potential intervention to reduce onset of NCDs. Seventy-six participants were recruited from existing healthcare consumer organisations, research programmes and healthcare networks through purposeful selection, with a focus on adequate representativeness.

Results: The majority (98%) of participants believe early screening for risk of NCD in their children was acceptable, provided it was equitable and clear pathways for referral and support were available. Mental health, cancer, atopic disease, hypertensive disease, obesity and reproductive health were listed as priorities for early screening and detection.

Conclusions: Engaging with Australian healthcare consumers to set research priorities and understand the acceptability of new technologies should be an integral part of all future research planning.