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New report shines light on changes in patient experience

The Bureau of Health information (BHI) has today released its annual healthcare performance report, focused this year on patients' experiences in NSW public hospitals over a five-year period.

Healthcare in Focus – People's experiences of hospital care: Insights from five years of patient feedback reflects on the experiences of care of more than 200,000 people in NSW who visited an emergency department (ED) or were admitted to a public hospital.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said the report identifies areas of patient experience with significant improvements or declines over five years, and areas where patients' ratings of care have been consistently high or low during that time.

"Patient surveys provide a unique perspective on the healthcare system that can only come from asking people about their personal experiences," said Dr Watson.

"When thousands of patients tell you about their personal experiences you can identify and report on the strengths and weaknesses of the NSW healthcare system overall, as well as across local health districts and hospitals."

Emergency department patients, 2014–15 to 2018–19

ED patients' ratings of their overall experience of care remained relatively stable at NSW level, with almost six in 10 (58%) rating their overall care in EDs as 'very good' in 2018–19.

Patients gave consistently high ratings of how kind and caring health professionals were and there was an improvement for three of the 31 measures, including how involved patients felt they were in decisions about their care.

There were declines in patient experience in four areas, including pain management, the degree to which signposting offers clear directions to the ED, and the number of patients who reported spending less than four hours in ED.

Admitted patients, 2014 to 2018

Patients admitted to hospital were increasingly positive about their overall experience of care at NSW level, with more than two-thirds (67%) rating their overall care as 'very good' in 2018 – a significant improvement.

There were improvements across more than half of the measures (29 out of 51), including interactions with nurses and doctors, and the cleanliness of wards and rooms.

The only area where there was a decline in patient experience was the likelihood of experiencing a delay when being discharged from hospital.

"The information in this report is very important because it is now widely recognised that patients' experiences in hospital are important determinants of the outcomes of their care," said Dr Watson.

"Those responsible for managing and delivering healthcare services can use this information to help inform their ongoing efforts to improve care for patients in NSW."

BHI has also today released the results from the Emergency Department Patient Survey 2018–19 for 77 hospitals and the Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey 2019 for 65 hospitals.

The *Healthcare in Focus* report and detailed results from both patient surveys released today are available at bhi.nsw.gov.au