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Notable improvements in patients' experiences in NSW emergency departments

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released survey results reflecting the experiences of almost 18,000 patients in 77 large NSW emergency departments (EDs) in 2019–20.

Most patients in NSW who responded to the Emergency Department Patient Survey were positive about their experiences of care, with almost nine in 10 (88%) rating their care in EDs as either 'very good' or 'good'.

BHI Chief Executive, Dr Diane Watson, said results for most survey questions improved at the state level between 2018–19 and 2019–20.

"These results show ED patients in NSW had more positive experiences overall and across their journey of care when compared with the previous year's survey," Dr Watson said.

Patients were particularly positive about the healthcare professionals who delivered their care in the ED.

- 69% of patients rated the ED health professionals who treated them as 'very good' – up from 65% in 2018–19.
- 87% said ED health professionals were 'always' polite and courteous – up from 85% in 2018–19.
- When asked to rate how well ED health professionals worked together, 60% said 'very good' – up from 55% in 2018–19.

Other notable improvements were seen for questions regarding the cleanliness of the ED and the timeliness of care – for example, patients were more likely to say the ED waiting area was 'very clean', and more likely to report shorter waiting times between their triage and treatment.

The results also allow healthcare professionals to see where there are opportunities to improve:

- More than one in 10 patients (14%) said that, on arrival, they did not receive enough information about what to expect during their visit.
- Of the 9% of patients who experienced a complication related to their stay, 31% said hospital staff had not been open with them about it.

"Patients' experiences are an important factor in the overall quality and outcomes of their care," Dr Watson said.

"Healthcare professionals now have these results which they can use to tailor care to the needs of their patients."

The 2019–20 survey period included the emergence of COVID-19 in NSW in early 2020 which resulted in significant changes in how services were delivered, including the establishment of dedicated testing clinics and increased use of personal protective equipment in hospitals. In 2020, there were also fewer attendances at NSW EDs.

A *Snapshot* report highlights key findings for 12 questions, including variation between hospitals.

Full survey results, including for all 77 individual EDs, are available in BHI's interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer at bhi.nsw.gov.au