



Results from the 2019 patient survey

Rural Hospital Emergency Care

More than 6,000 people told us about their experiences of emergency care in small, rural public hospitals in NSW

People across NSW expect to receive high-quality care wherever they live, including in rural, regional and remote areas.

The results of the Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey 2019 reflect the experiences of 6,156 patients who received emergency care from one of 65 small, rural public hospitals between January and April 2019. Results for individual hospitals are available in the supplementary data tables for this survey and on the Bureau of Health Information (BHI's) interactive data portal, Healthcare Observer, at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Overall ratings of care: More than nine in 10 patients (94%) rated their overall care as 'very good' (78%) or 'good' (16%). Around nine in 10 patients (92%) said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity, and more than seven in 10 (73%) rated the way health professionals worked together as 'very good' (pages 2–3).

Experiences of care: More than eight in 10 patients (86%) said health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand. Nine in 10 patients (90%)

said they were always given enough privacy, while more than seven in 10 (77%) said they were 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care and treatment (pages 4–5).

Experiences at discharge and patient outcomes:

Almost nine in 10 patients (88%) said they were told who to contact if they were worried about their condition after leaving the hospital. More than seven in 10 patients (77%) said the care and treatment 'definitely' helped them, while fewer than one in 10 (8%) said they experienced a complication or problem related to their visit (pages 6–7).

Patient comments: Patients were asked to leave a comment about the best part of their care and what could be improved. Many patients were complimentary about interactions with staff, including their friendliness, politeness, compassion and understanding. When asked what could be improved, many patients highlighted a lack of staff and specialists as an issue (pages 8–11).

Overall, patients rated their care as

'very good'

78%

'good'

16%



Overall ratings of care

Overall ratings of care reflect general patient satisfaction about their hospital visit.

Among patients who attended a small, rural hospital for emergency care in 2019, more than seven in 10 (78%) said, overall, the care they received was 'very good' (Figure 1a). This was up from 76% in 2015–16. Results for those rating their care as 'very good' ranged from 67% to 90% across hospitals (Figure 2a).

Around nine in 10 patients (92%) said they were 'always' treated with respect and dignity (Figure 1b). This was up from 90% in 2015–16. Results ranged from 85% to 98% across hospitals (Figure 2b).

Around seven in 10 patients (73%) rated the way ED health professionals worked together as 'very good' (Figure 1c). This was up from 71% in 2015–16. Results ranged from 63% to 89% across hospitals (Figure 2c).

Around eight in 10 patients (81%) rated nurses as 'very good'. This ranged from 73% to 93% across hospitals. Around seven in 10 patients (73%) rated doctors as 'very good'. This ranged from 61% to 90% across hospitals (data not shown).

Some patient groups tend to respond more positively to surveys. This means that hospitals with higher proportions of patients with these characteristics tend to have higher patient experience ratings. To enable fairer comparisons, BHI has taken characteristics of hospitals' patients (age and sex) into account. Therefore, when a hospital is flagged as having a significantly higher or lower result than NSW, this is more likely to reflect differences in patient experiences and less likely to reflect differences in the hospital's patient mix. For further details, please see the survey's technical supplement at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 1 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Overall, how would you rate the care you received while in the ED?



b. Did you feel you were treated with respect and dignity while you were in the ED?



c. How would you rate how the ED health professionals worked together?

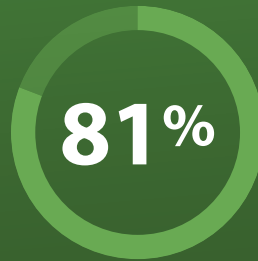


Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Patients were asked how they would rate the doctors and nurses who provided emergency care.



said doctors were 'very good'



said nurses were 'very good'

Best part of care...

“

We know the doctors and hospital staff. They are friendly, kind and helpful at all times. We feel very safe and secure at our hospital.

”

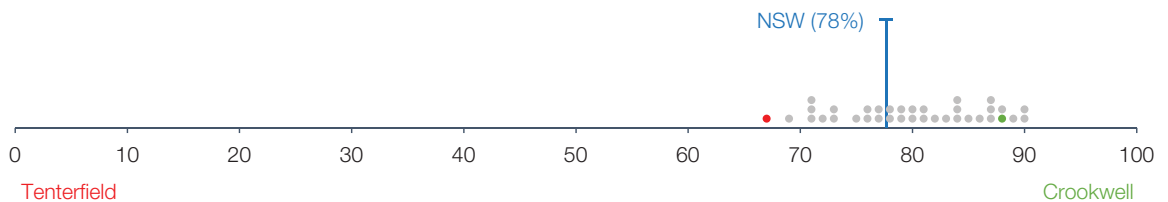
In the figures below, each dot represents an individual hospital's result. After accounting for patient characteristics, hospitals with results significantly different from NSW are listed below the graph in order from lowest to highest. Detailed results for all hospitals are available in Healthcare Observer at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 2

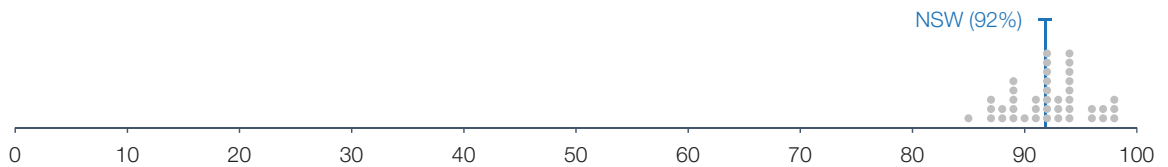
Percentage of patients in each hospital who selected the most positive response option, 2019

Hospital result relative to NSW: • Significantly lower • Not significantly different • Significantly higher

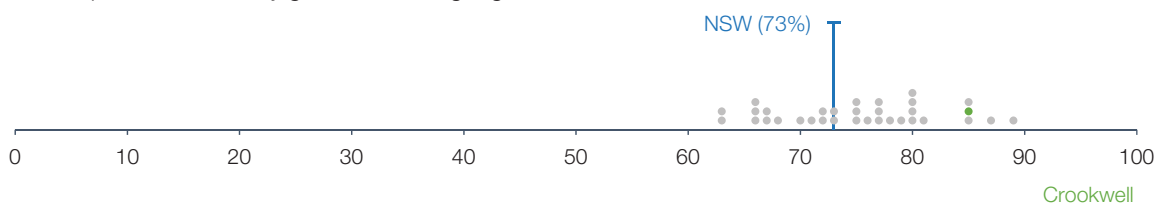
a. Overall, care in ED was 'very good'



b. 'Always' treated with respect and dignity*



c. ED professionals 'very good' at working together



*There were no hospitals that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for this measure.

Note: A hospital is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or significantly lower than NSW for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age and sex) have been taken into account.

Experiences of care

Patients shared their experiences about different aspects of their treatment and emergency care in small, rural hospitals, including communication with health professionals and privacy.

More than eight in 10 patients (86%) said health professionals ‘always’ explained things in a way they could understand (Figure 3a). This was unchanged from 2015–16. This ranged from 76% to 96% across hospitals (Figure 4a).

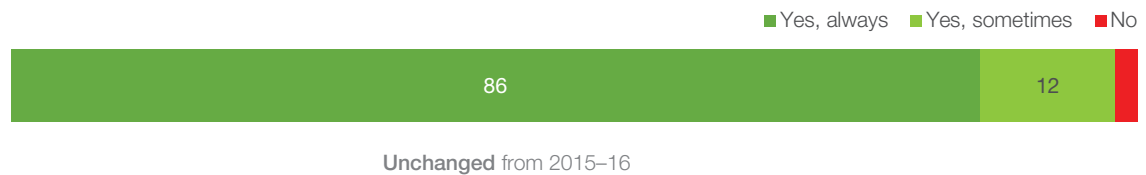
When asked about privacy, nine in 10 patients (90%) said they were ‘always’ given enough privacy

during their visit (Figure 3b). This was up from 88% in 2015–16. Results ranged from 78% to 96% across hospitals (Figure 4b).

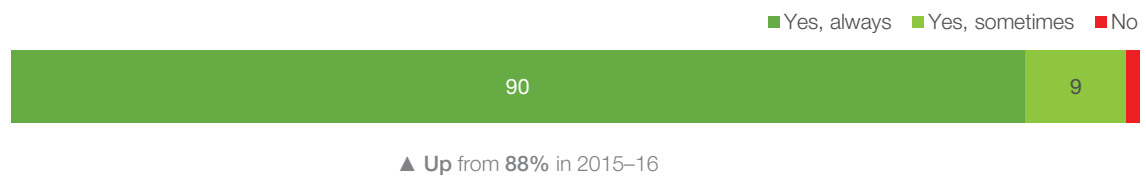
More than nine in 10 patients (94%) said they wanted to be involved in decisions about their care and treatment. Of those patients, 77% said they were ‘definitely’ involved as much as they wanted to be (Figure 3c). This was up from 76% in 2015–16. Across hospitals, results ranged from 60% to 93% (Figure 4c).

Figure 3 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2019

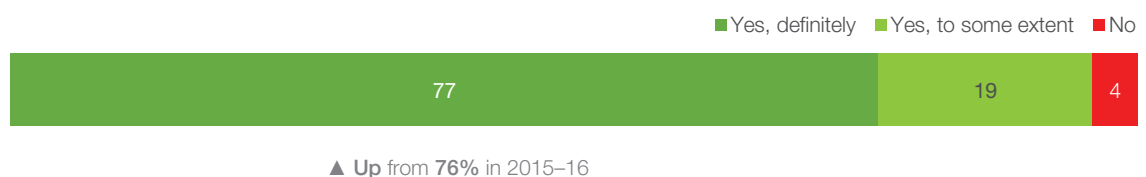
a. Did the ED health professionals explain things in a way you could understand?



b. Were you given enough privacy during your visit to the ED?



c. Were you involved, as much as you wanted to be, in decisions about your care and treatment?*



*Based on responses from 94% of patients, excluding those who did not want or were too unwell to be involved in decisions about their care and treatment. Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

What could improve...

“

Contradictory advice from doctors consulted by videoconferencing.

These doctors only talked to the nurses, not me, the patient. At no time did they even see me.

”

Of the 33% of patients prescribed a new medication to take home...



'completely' understood when health professionals explained its purpose.

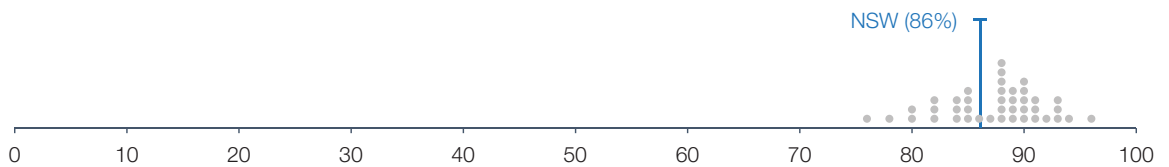


said health professionals 'completely' explained side effects to watch for.

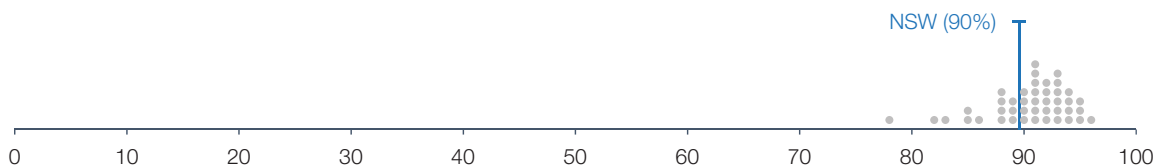
Figure 4 Percentage of patients in each hospital who selected the most positive response option, 2019

Hospital result relative to NSW: ● Significantly lower ● Not significantly different ● Significantly higher

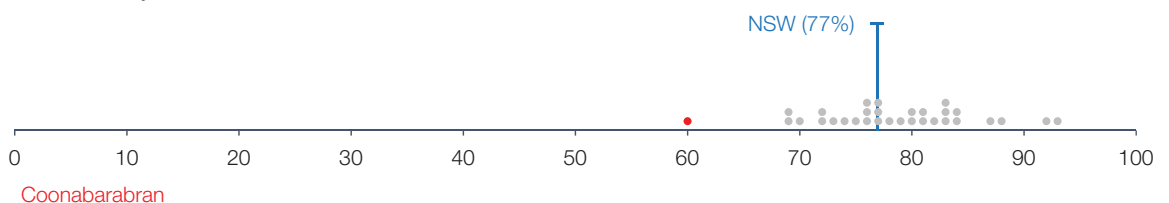
a. ED health professionals 'always' explained things in an understandable way*



b. 'Always' given enough privacy*



c. 'Definitely' felt involved in decisions about care and treatment



*There were no hospitals that had a significantly higher or lower result than NSW for this measure.

Note: A hospital is noted as having a result that is significantly higher or significantly lower than NSW for a question after differences in patient characteristics (age and sex) have been taken into account.

Experiences at discharge and patient outcomes

Patients were asked about their experiences when leaving hospital, including how well prepared they felt to go home, the impact of the care they received and whether they experienced any complications or problems.

Almost nine in 10 patients (88%) said they were told who to contact if they were worried about their condition or treatment after they left the hospital (Figure 5a). This was down from 89% in 2015–16.

When asked whether the care and treatment helped them, more than seven in 10 patients (76%) said ‘yes, definitely’ (Figure 5b). This was down from 78% in 2015–16.

Patients may experience complications or problems during or shortly after their visit to hospital. Fewer than one in 10 patients (8%) said they experienced at least one complication or problem related to their stay (Figure 5c). This was unchanged from 2015–16.

The most common complication or problem reported by patients was infection (3%), severe pain due to the treatment (1%), negative reaction to medication (1%) and falls (1%) (data not shown). Around two in 10 patients (21%) said the impact of the complication or problem they experienced was ‘very serious’. This was up from 17% in 2015–16.

More than half of patients who said they experienced a complication or problem (55%) said staff were ‘completely’ open with them about it. This was up from 49% in 2015–16.

Results are provided without hospital comparison for outcomes of care questions. Patients with more complex conditions are likely to have less positive outcomes, and surveys do not contain the information required to fully account for these differences across hospitals.

Figure 5 Percentage of patients in NSW, all response options, 2019

a. Did ED staff tell you who to contact if you were worried about your condition or treatment after you left hospital?



▼ Down from 89% in 2015–16

b. Did the care and treatment received in hospital help you?



▼ Down from 78% in 2015–16

c. Experienced complication or problem during or shortly after hospital stay



Unchanged from 2015–16

Note: Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Of the 8% of patients who said they experienced a complication or problem related to their stay...



said health professionals were 'completely' open with them about it.

said its impact was 'very serious'.

Best part of care...



The nurses were caring and considerate. The senior nurse understood my condition well and gave excellent follow-up advice before I was discharged.



What could improve...



The patient needs to know what is happening with their health issues... In my case, I left the hospital not knowing what was wrong with me.



Patients' comments

Patients' comments can help health professionals improve care. The survey asked patients to respond to two questions related to the emergency care they received in small, rural hospitals: what was the best part of their care, and what needed improving.

Of the 6,156 patients surveyed, 4,421 (72%) provided comments in response to at least one of the two questions: 4,212 (68%) responded to 'what was the best part of the care you received while in this ED?'; and 3,395 (55%) responded to 'what most needs improving about the care you received while in this ED?'

While all patients' comments are provided to local health districts (LHDs) to help inform improvement, BHI conducted analyses of a sample of 15% of the 4,421 patients who provided any comments. This sample was designed to reflect characteristics of respondents to the survey (for example, by LHD, age and admission status).

A patient's comment may mention more than one topic or theme. Among those who provided comments about the best part of their care, patients were most commonly positive about their interactions with staff (355 mentions), for example, staff being helpful, kind and reassuring. This was followed by 246 mentions that were complimentary about overall experience and 200 mentions about the quality of the treatment and care received.

For patients who offered feedback about what could improve, the most common type of mention related to aspects of staffing (104 mentions), for example, a lack of staff and specialists. This was followed by 65 mentions about facilities needing improvement and 58 mentions about the timeliness of care and treatment (Figure 6).

Best part of care...

“

The staff and doctors at the hospital are very friendly and caring. You are made to feel that nothing is a bother to them.

”

What could improve...

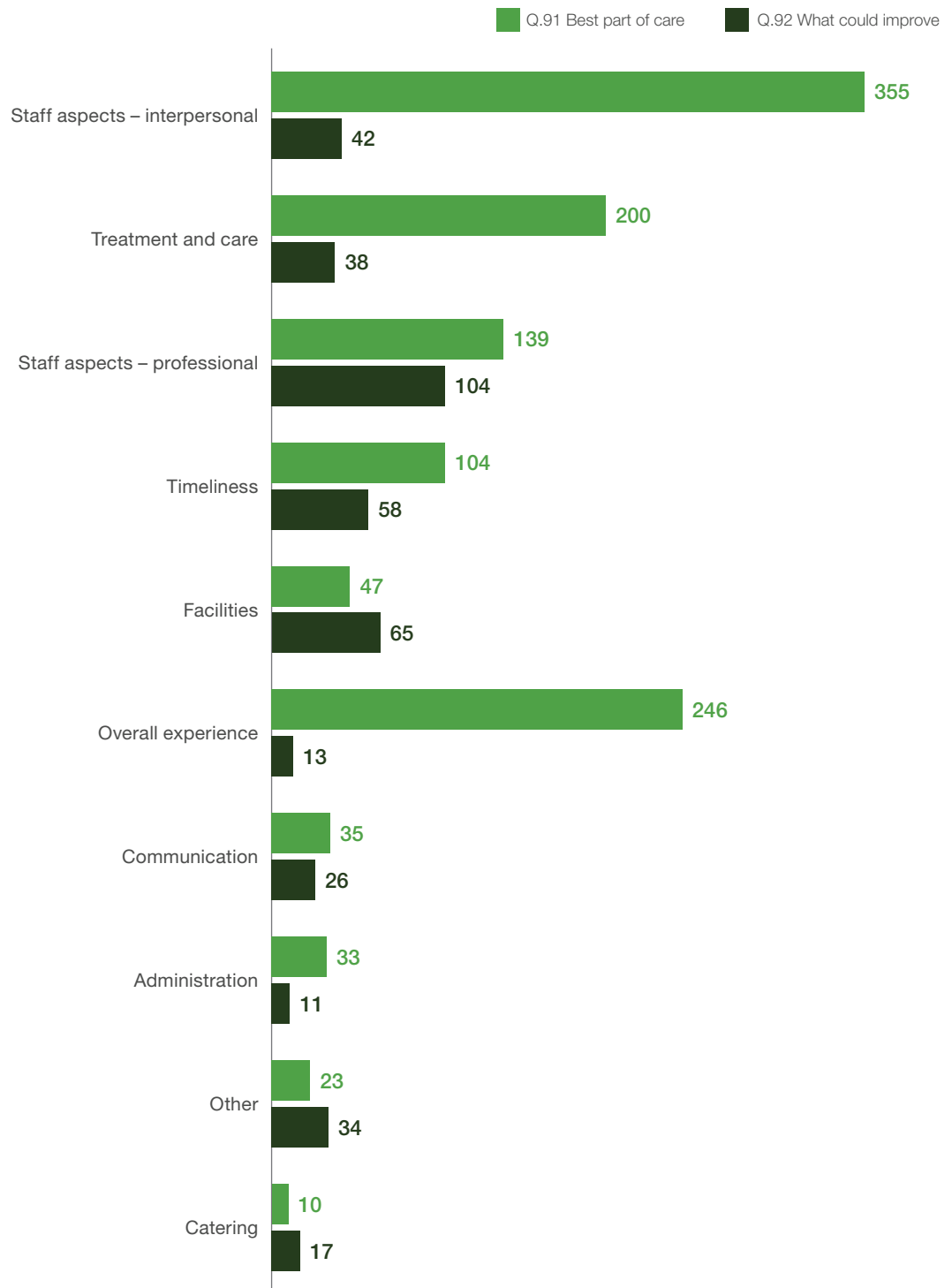
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Being a small country town, we only have one doctor and as he was away this put extra burden on the nursing staff.

”

Figure 6

Number of mentions for 'best part of care' and 'what could improve' across all comments by theme



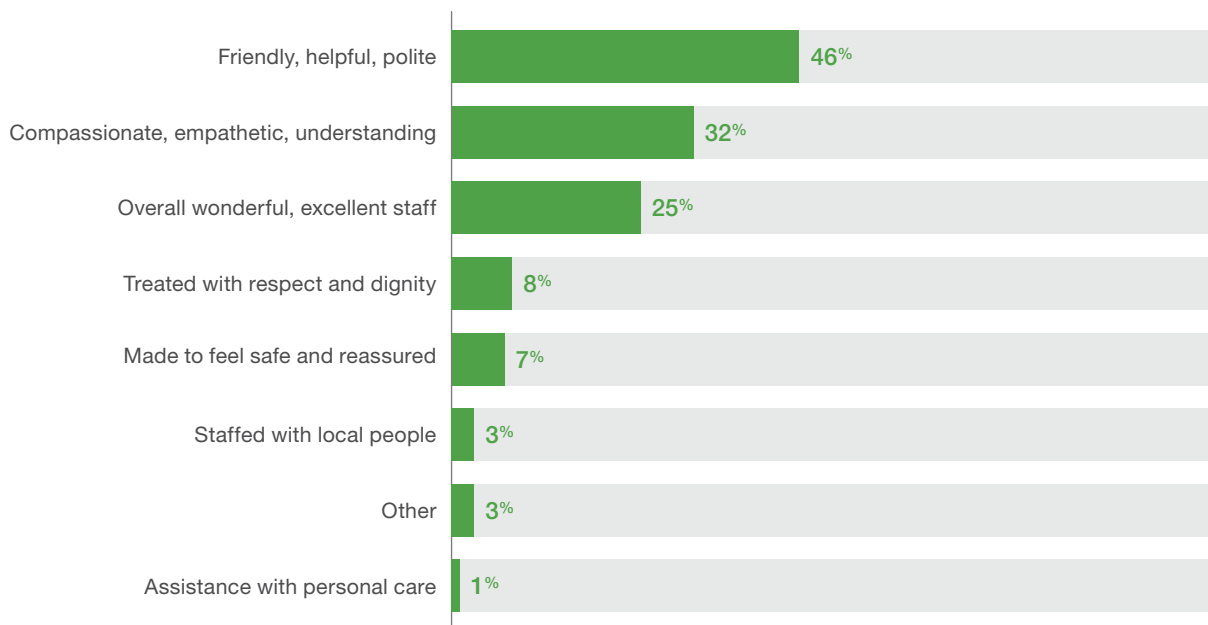
Notes: Some comments required additional analysis to ensure the patient's experiences during their visit were captured as completely as possible. There were 27 comments in response to 'What was the best part of care' that were re-assigned to 'What most needs improving' and 242 comments in response to 'What most needs improving' that were re-assigned to 'What was the best part of care'. See the Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey 2019 technical supplement for more details on recoding comments. As comments may address more than one topic area or theme, there are more mentions by theme than total number of comments analysed.

Patients' comments

For the patients who said interactions with staff contributed to the 'best part' of their care, their comments were further categorised into more detailed themes. Almost half of these patients (46%) said that staff being friendly and polite was the best part of their emergency care in small, rural hospitals, followed by the staff being compassionate and understanding (32%) (Figure 7).

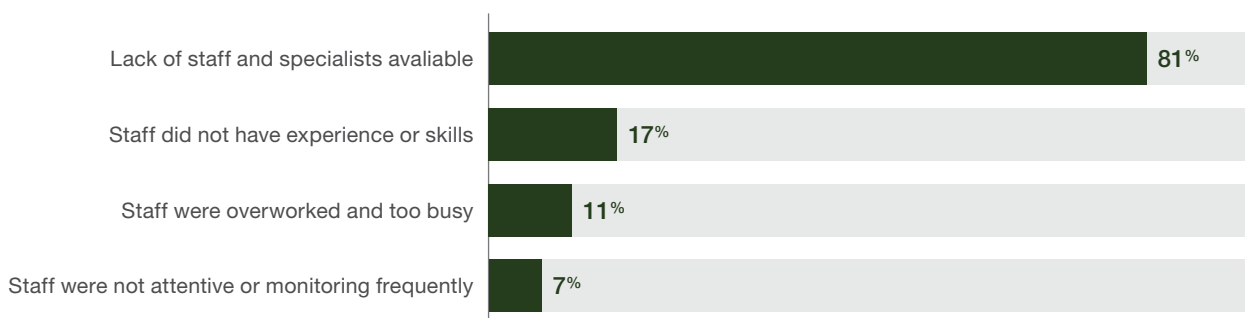
For the respondents who said aspects of care related to staff could be improved, their comments were further categorised into more detailed themes. More than eight in 10 patients (87%) said a lack of staff and specialists was a problem, followed by staff lacking certain experience or skills (17%) (Figure 8).

Figure 7 Percentage of respondents who said 'staff – interpersonal' category was the 'best part of care' by sub-theme



Note: As comments may address more than one topic area or sub-theme, and percentages are rounded, results will not add up to 100%.

Figure 8 Percentage of respondents who said 'staff – professional' category 'could improve' by sub-theme



Note: As comments may address more than one topic area or sub-theme, and percentages are rounded, results will not add up to 100%.

Around seven in 10 patients (72%) provided comments.



Best part of care...

“

Friendliness and positive environment created by health professionals. I felt at ease because of their personal and professional approach.

”

“

Being a local I know most of our wonderful nurses and they are very kind to me. We have a chat and a laugh. I have no fears coming to the ED.

”

What could improve...

“

Staff were very busy... and some upgrades would help what is a great little hospital in a growing town.

”

“

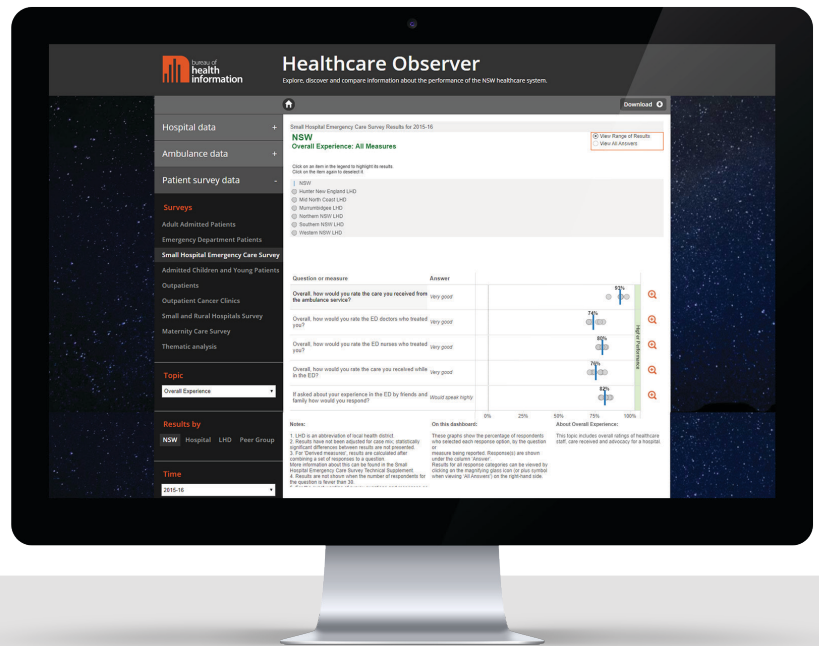
They could do with more funding so they're not so reliant on one doctor running between the medical centre and the ED. It's really not fair on any of the staff, although they handled the situation very professionally.

”

Healthcare Observer

Healthcare Observer is the Bureau of Health Information (BHI's) online interactive data portal which lets you explore and download information about the performance of the NSW healthcare system.

Full results from the Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey 2019 are available at bhi.nsw.gov.au/Healthcare_Observer



Adult Admitted Patient Survey



Emergency Department Patient Survey



Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey



Admitted Children and Young Patients Survey



Maternity Care Survey



Rural Hospital Adult Admitted Patient Survey



Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey

NSW Patient Survey Program

Each month we ask thousands of people in NSW to tell us about their recent experience with the public healthcare system as part of the NSW Patient Survey Program.

The surveys ask people questions about different aspects of their care such as accessibility and timeliness, the physical environment of the hospital, safety and hygiene, communication and information, and whether they were treated with respect and dignity.

Further information about our surveys can be found at bhi.nsw.gov.au/nsw_patient_survey_program

About the Bureau of Health Information

BHI is a board-governed organisation that publishes independent reports and information about the performance of the healthcare system in NSW.

We aim to provide the community, health professionals and policy makers with information that enhances visibility and understanding of the performance of the healthcare system, in order to inform actions to improve healthcare and strengthen accountability.

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