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First insights into the care of children and young people in NSW public hospitals

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released the results of a survey of more than 8,000 children and young patients who spent time in a NSW public hospital in 2014. It is the first time that children and young patients — along with their parents — have been asked about their experiences of care.

BHI's *Snapshot Report* shows that overall, 31% of respondents said the care children received in hospital was good and 63% said it was very good. It also shows 76% would speak highly of the hospital to friends and family.

Interactions with health professionals were rated particularly highly. Nine in 10 young patients said doctors and nurses were always kind and caring, and polite and courteous towards them, and a similar proportion said they were always treated with respect and dignity.

Eight in 10 parents reported having confidence and trust in the doctors and nurses treating their child, and nine in 10 said they were given the right amount of information about their child's treatment.

Despite this, the report highlights other aspects of communication that could be improved:

- Half of parents said they did not always have the opportunity to speak to a doctor when needed
- One in 10 parents said they definitely received contradictory information from health professionals
- One in four said they were not told about the side effects of new medications prescribed
- Three in 10 said they were not fully informed upon discharge about how to manage their child's care at home.

"The provision of information is an important issue at crucial transitions in young people's care, such as when new medications are prescribed and upon their discharge from hospital," said Dr Levesque.

"Children and their parents were treated in a kind and caring way, however they were not always given all information in a way they could understand by health professionals."

When asked about their hospital experience, the report shows older children aged 8–17 years were mostly positive. However older children identified room for improvement when it came to the physical environment. Four in 10 older children said they were bothered by noise, and one in seven said the hospital room was not suitable for someone their age. Half of older children said they were definitely involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care.

"It is very important to listen to what older children have to say about their own care," Dr Levesque said.

"The survey results show they would like to be more engaged, and that attention needs to be paid to ensuring the environment in which they receive care is age-appropriate."

Most questionnaires were completed by a parent or carer on behalf of their child. A further set of questions was addressed directly to young patients aged 8–17 years.

The *Snapshot Report*, as well as full results for NSW hospitals and local health districts on BHI's online data portal Healthcare Observer, are available at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

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