

**16 October 2024**

## New report: Patients rate safety culture in NSW hospitals

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has released a report that reveals important new insights into patients' experiences of safety culture in NSW public hospitals over time.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said *The Insights Series – Patients' experiences of safe care and readmission to hospital over time* is based on feedback from more than 115,000 patients admitted to NSW public hospitals who completed a survey about their experiences between 2018 and 2023.

“Research clearly shows the link between patient experience and clinical safety, including objectively measured health outcomes such as unplanned readmissions to hospital,” Dr Watson said.

The report shows that, over time, NSW patients admitted to hospital were significantly more likely to rate the way health professionals worked together as a team as ‘very good’ (from 61% in 2018 to 66% in 2023).

Patients were also significantly more likely to say health professionals ‘definitely’ told them about possible side effects of new medications, if they were given any to take home. However, ratings remained relatively low (from 55% in 2018 to 58% in 2023).

“The report also shows where patients' experiences declined over time, including highlighting those local health districts where ratings of care decreased,” Dr Watson said. “These evidence-based insights can be used by health system managers, alongside other clinical measures, to inform improvement efforts that address patient experiences related to safety risk in NSW hospitals.”

Patients who experienced a problem during or shortly after their stay (fewer than one in five), were significantly less likely over time to say health professionals were ‘definitely’ open with them about it (from 52% in 2018 to 38% in 2023).

Most patients said health professionals ‘always’ explained things in a way they could understand. However, ratings declined significantly over time (from 81% in 2018 to 79% in 2023).

“BHI’s published research papers show that when patients admitted to hospital are more positive about key survey questions related to health professionals’ explanations, medication counselling and health professionals working together, they are far less likely to be readmitted to hospital,” Dr Watson said.

### Results of the Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey 2024

BHI has also released the latest results of the Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey, reflecting feedback from almost 10,000 patients.

The report provides new insights about cancer patients' full journey of care since diagnosis, including experiences with the clinic, their general practitioner and other health services.

Most patients were positive about the information they were provided when diagnosed, and involvement in decision-making about treatment. However, they were less positive about the journey of care in other areas:

- Of around one-third of patients (35%) who experienced a loss of income or other financial burden (e.g. out-of-pocket medical costs), 63% said it was medium (43%) or high (20%) impact.
- Almost one-third of patients (31%) said they weren't given information about relevant support programs (e.g. counselling, financial and mental health).

Patients also provided feedback about their most recent experience with one of 44 clinics across NSW, in February 2024, with almost all (99%) saying that, overall, the care they received was 'very good' or 'good'.

Detailed results for both reports are available in supplementary data tables and the BHI Data Portal at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

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