National Survey Shows 'Encouraging' Improvements In People's Hospital Experiences

Tuesday 8 April, 2014

People are generally having a better experience in hospital than a year ago but the quality of their stays can vary, according to a national survey from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Around one in four people rated their overall experience in hospital as 10 out of 10, reveals the survey, which gathered the views of over 62,400 people who had stayed in hospital for at least one night last year.

The survey asked people to give their opinions on the care they received, including on the information provided by staff, whether they were given enough privacy, the cleanliness of their wards, and on their discharge arrangements.

On a national level, people were more positive about their stays in hospitals, with most responses in the survey having improved or stayed the same since it was last carried out in 2012.

Key highlights include:

Overall experience: 71% rated their overall experience as 8 or above and 27% as 10 out of 10; up from 69% and 25% in 2012. Dignity and respect: 81% of people felt they were always treated with dignity and respect; up from 80% in 2012. Discharge arrangements: 54% felt that they were "definitely" involved in decisions about their discharge from hospital; an increase from 53% in 2012 but this still leaves 46% who did not feel fully involved. Also, 41% of those surveyed said that their discharge from hospital was delayed, representing no change from last year. The delay was for longer than four hours for around 1 in 4 (24%) of these people. Waiting for medicines was the most common reason. Providing information to patients: 3 out of 4 (75%) said that they were given the "right amount" of information about their condition or treatment by staff when they went through A&E and 80% said the same about their hospital ward; up from 74% and 79% in 2012. However, almost two fifths (39%) felt they were not given sufficient information about the side effects of their medication before being sent home.

Alongside the national improvements, some of the responses in the survey show a wide range in performance between NHS trusts. For example, there were large variations in responses to questions about patients being told how to make complaints about their care, whether they received copies of letters sent between their hospital doctors and GPs, and whether staff told them about any danger signals they should watch out for after being discharged. Also, variations were reported in people being given printed information about what they should do or avoid doing after leaving hospital, and whether they had someone from the hospital to talk to about their worries and fears.

Areas where there was the least variation between NHS trusts include whether respondents felt threatened during their hospital stay by other patients or visitors, whether they were given enough privacy when being examined or treated on the hospital ward, and whether hand-wash gels were available to use. Also, there was little variation in whether people trusted and had confidence in their doctors. Overall, NHS trusts scored well in all of these areas.

As well as a report of the national findings, CQC has published the results for each of the 156 acute and specialist NHS trusts that took part, so that people can see how their local services performed.

Professor Sir Mike Richards, Chief Inspector of Hospitals said: "It is encouraging that the results for many of the questions in the survey show improvements, with areas such as information provision, cleanliness and privacy all performing better than last year. However, scope for continued improvement remains, including with how patients are involved in their discharge arrangements.

"I would like NHS trusts to reflect on their survey results to understand what their patients really think about the care and treatment they provide. This will help them to identify what they need to change.

"Gathering feedback from people who use services is at the heart of our new approach to regulation. We will use information from the survey as part of our wider monitoring of hospitals, to help us determine what we should inspect and when."

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Notes to Editors

- For further information about the adult inpatients survey, including the national summary and the results for each NHS trust that took part, please visit: www.cqc.org.uk/inpatientsurvey2013.

- The survey was eligible to people who were aged 16 and over and had spent at least one night in hospital between June and August last year, excluding those who were admitted to maternity or psychiatry units.

- Information drawn from the survey will be used by CQC as part of its "Intelligent Monitoring" of hospitals. For further information about CQC's Intelligent Monitoring tool, please visit: www.cqc.org.uk/public/hospital-intelligent-monitoring

- The inpatient survey is part of a wider programme of NHS patient surveys, which cover topics including maternity, outpatient and A&E services, ambulances, and community mental health services. For further information, visit: www.cqc.org.uk/public/reports-surveys-and-reviews/surveys?cqc

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