The Patients Association responds to CQC State of Care report

This week the Care and Quality Commission (CQC) released their State of Care report, an annual assessment of health and social care in England.

Rachel Power, Chief Executive of the Patients Association, said: “The State of Care report shows that the NHS and local authorities are overwhelmingly delivering health and social care to a high standard. Although headlines in the media, and callers to our helpline, commonly talk about the occasions when things go wrong, it’s good to be reminded that these are relatively unusual.

“However, Wednesday’s report also doesn’t flinch from pointing out the room for improvement that exists in some areas, and the mounting pressures on the system, including financial constraints, demographic change and the ongoing need for a new solution for funding social care. The dedicated clinicians and health and social care
professionals who have maintained quality for this long will not be able to compensate indefinitely for a system under ever-growing strain.

“We know that accessing some services is becoming more difficult, with waiting times increasing and CCGs imposing new bars and caps on certain types of treatment and care. The CQC’s warning that the system cannot withstand the mounting pressures indefinitely while still maintaining quality is highly timely, and we hope that the Chancellor will take it into account ahead of this autumn’s Budget. We can see that our health and social care system can deliver to a high standard if given the resources – the Government must ensure that it does not start to falter at scale for lack of funds.”

Policy Focus: The King's Fund warns of falling number of NHS nurses

The King’s Fund has warned about an increase in pressure on the NHS after finding a year-on-year fall in the number of nurses for the first time since 2013. They found the number of nurses and health visitors employed by the NHS was less in April, May and June when compared to the same months in the previous year.

Analysis from the King’s Fund found that one of the key factors in the fall was a reduction in EU nurses working in the NHS. A sharp decline in EU nurses registering to work for the NHS since the Brexit referendum, changes to English language requirements and a number of the current EU staff leaving all contributed to a ‘significant drop’ in EU nurses.

As well as a drop in EU nurses, the report discovered that an increase in staff leaving as a result of ill-health or due to the work-life balance had also contributed to the loss of nurses.

Richard Murray, Director of Policy at The King’s Fund, said: "There is good evidence that having enough nurses is essential for delivering safe care, and so it is worrying that the number of nurses is going down at a time when services are already overstretched and the demand for care is rising.

"This means the NHS is less equipped to cope with the demands of a winter that was already threatening to stretch the NHS to the limit."

Get involved: patient involvement app

Readers may be interested in the following opportunity to be involved in the development of an app to help patients with recurrent urinary infections:

We were approached by a small team of doctors and a leading patient advocate looking to create an app to help those with recurrent urinary infections.

They will offer £40 for your time and the location of the meetings will be in London. If you are interested please send an email to tsongkwongapps@gmail.com to find out more information and to arrange a suitable time and date to meet.

They would like to get feedback on their concept and on the early prototype work. They are looking for participants who can give up an hour of their time to do a joint focus group or 1-
2-1 interviews. They require patients who:

- suffer from at least 3 infections per year
- are under active treatment by a GP and urologist
- use a smartphone.

Patients diagnosed with interstitial cystitis/bladder pain syndrome are unfortunately excluded.

Get involved

From the helpline

Indications from Australia and New Zealand suggests that there could be an increased risk of catching the flu this winter, because of this our helpline would like to remind readers that they may be entitled to a flu vaccination on the NHS.

Whilst most people who catch the flu make a full recovery and do not require medical attention, for some the effects can be severe. To help those who may be more vulnerable the NHS offers an annual flu vaccination. The vaccination is provided for free to the following:

- adults over the age of 18 at risk of flu (including everyone aged 65 and over)
- pregnant women
- children aged six months to two years at risk of flu.

The NHS recommend the best time to get the vaccination is between October and November, and you can receive the vaccination at your GP surgery, as well as many local pharmacies.

If you require any further information and to find out whether you might be entitled to the vaccination on the NHS, visit the NHS Choices website.

If you would like to receive impartial help and advice on a wide range of health and social care issues, please do not hesitate to contact our helpline on (020) 8423 8999 or you can email us at helpline@patients-association.com.

Contact us
In the news: why emergency admissions are growing

In the past 15 years there has been a 50% increase in the number of people admitted to hospital in an emergency. Not only is this putting a huge strain on hospital resources, costing the NHS billions, but it also causes anxiety for patients.

Recent initiatives have been made to address this problem, including policies that aim to reduce unplanned admissions through concentrating on better care outside of hospital. However, it’s been largely unclear up until now why it is happening in the first place.

Dr Mauro Laudicella, a lecturer in health economics at the University of London, argues that this rise is down to three key factors:

First, it’s widely recognised that emergency admissions have increased due to a higher percentage of the population now being over 65 and more likely to use NHS services. Nevertheless, studies show that this trend only accounts for approximately 40-50% of total growth.

Second, policy makers have identified some unplanned admissions would be avoidable by increased hospital efficiency. Nevertheless these reasons alone do not account for the dramatic rise.

A new study was commissioned by Health Services Research therefore, to try and detect whether improvement in hospital survival rates on patients’ might in fact lead to follow-up emergency admissions.

Using a sample of nine million patients who had been admitted for acute care, Health Services Research then tracked these patients for two more years, counting the times they were readmitted to hospital. They found that every year, more patients survived and that these patients then experienced a greater number of later admissions.

Therefore many emergency admissions can, somewhat ironically, be explained by the success of hospitals in saving more people with life-threatening conditions.

Donate

We rely on the generosity of the public to help us continue delivering the support so desperately needed by so many. Please pass on the word to your friends and family and if you would like to make a donation then please click the link below. Thank you for your continued support.

What our team is reading this week
Prince Harry calls for society to embrace HIV and Aids tests

Jeremy Hunt to pledge £20,000 'golden hello' for rural GPs

Child and teen obesity spreading across the globe

How your blood may predict your future health

Embedding GPs in A&E departments increases antibiotic prescriptions, study finds

About Us
The Patients Association's mission is to listen to patients and to speak up for change.

Our vision is for health and social care services that provide high quality and safe care, where patients and their carers are valued as expert partners and recognised as individuals. And for a health system that is compassionate, accessible and inclusive for everyone that seeks to improve and innovate.

Likewise, we want to see a culture where transparency thrives, patients, their families, carers and staff are empowered to raise concerns and make complaints to contribute to a better and safer healthcare system. We believe this should be an accountable system where this feedback is valued and acted upon.

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