Welcome to the Patients Association Weekly News

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Waiting times: NHS criticised for ignoring impact of patients of delays

Cancer patients in three-fifths of NHS trusts in England are waiting too long for treatment and the devastating effects of delays are being "ignored" by ministers and health service chiefs, MPs have said. The Public Accounts Committee reported this week that a key target for cancer patients to receive treatment within two months has not been hit since 2013. Last November, just 38 per cent of trusts achieved the standard.

Meanwhile, the waiting list for non-urgent care had increased by 1.5m since March 2013 to 4.2m in November 2018. Following its inquiry, the committee said it was "concerned that the national bodies responsible for setting and managing waiting times appear to lack curiosity regarding the impact of longer waiting times on patient outcomes and on patient harm".

Responding to the findings of the report in comments covered in The Independent, The Sun and ITV News, Rachel Power, Chief Executive of the Patients Association, said:

"This is an ongoing and deeply concerning problem with serious consequences for patient care, and it is simply unacceptable for patients to be left in limbo in this way. Longer waits always mean more time spent in pain and discomfort. Policy decisions over numerous years have dug the NHS into this hole, and it will be very hard for it to pull itself out. Its funding is still inadequate to maintain service levels while redesigning and transforming services to meet the needs of our ageing population. At the same time, drastic intervention is required to plug the holes in its workforce, for which the Treasury must allocate new funds urgently, spending review or no spending review."

You can read more about the report's findings here.

Read more

Improving complaints handling and management
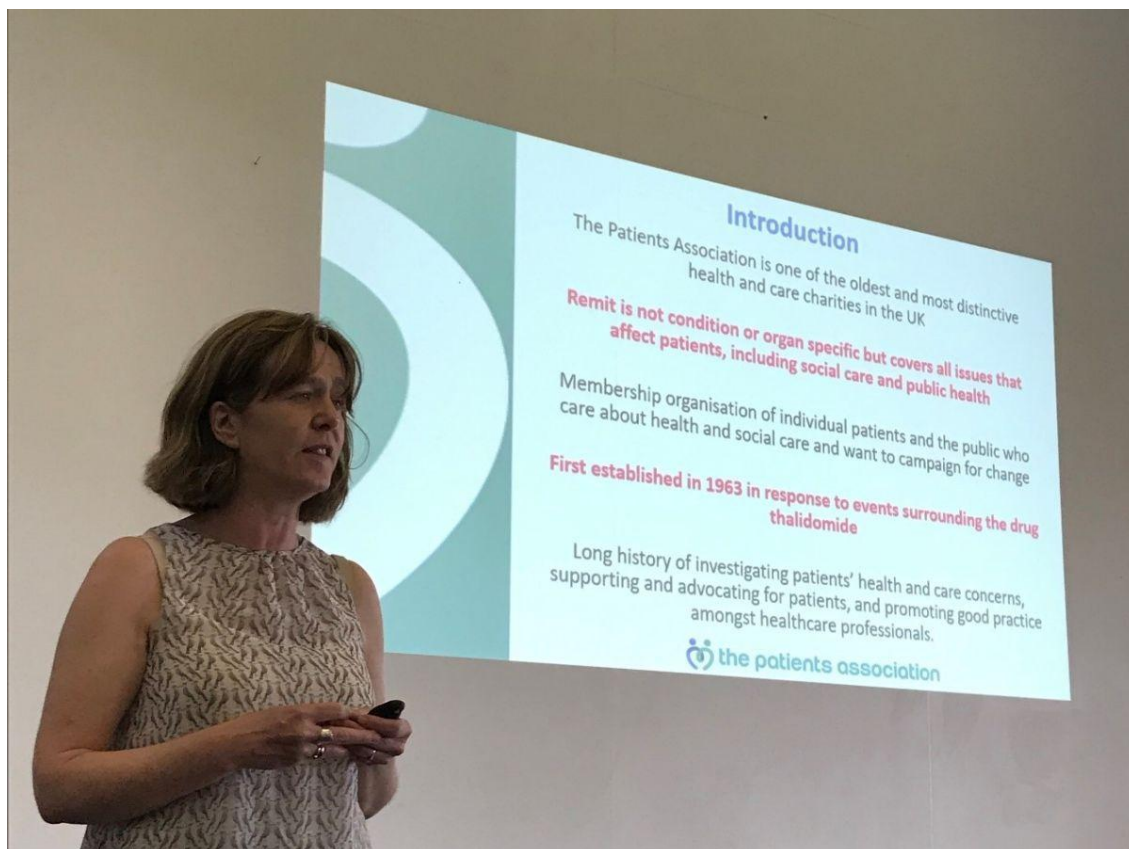
The Patients Association's Chief Executive, Rachel Power, this week joined an array of speakers at a complaints training event hosted by the Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS), the independent adjudicator for patients who have been treated in subscribing organisations.

The event focused on continual improvement in complaints management, with speakers from the Care Quality Commission, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the Independent Healthcare Providers Network sharing perspectives on handling complaints.

Rachel presented a number of anonymised case studies from our helpline, demonstrating how our helpline team support and advise people with a range of enquiries about the health and social care systems. Rachel highlighted the importance of clear and open communication with patients when they make a complaint, and

stressed that complaints handlers should show empathy when receiving concerns from people.

You can find out more about the work of ISCAS here.

Read more

Join our mission to improve patient experience

In last week's newsletter we introduced our new Head of Programmes (and also our Community and Patient Engagement Manager), Shivani Shah, and explained how our work with NHS trusts, companies and patient groups to improve care has grown over the past 12 months.

We're looking to grow our team once again to help us deliver the range of improvement projects we undertake, and are now recruiting for a project manager to join us on a freelance basis. This is an exciting and flexible role that will see the successful candidate work on a specific project from start to finish, gathering patient and service user feedback, and delivering high-quality reports which will help influence and shape health and social care.

We need someone who knows the NHS and social care processes and structures inside out, so if you're excited by the idea of a fresh challenge or know someone who you think is perfect for the role, apply today. If you'd like an informal discussion about the role or would like to know about some of the project work we have in the pipeline, get in touch by emailing mailbox@patients-association. Applications close on Friday 28 June 2019.

Find out more

Opportunities to have your say

Survey: Tell us about your experiences of unsafe, premature discharge

Have you completed our latest survey on unsafe discharge from hospital? It will close next week, so have your say this weekend to be sure of getting your views heard. We want to hear about times when someone has been discharged from hospital despite not being well enough to leave. If the person suffered harm as a result of this, or was at a real risk of harm, it was an unsafe discharge.

Too little research has been done on discharges that simply happened too early, even though we hear about this from callers to our helpline. If you think your experience, or the experience of someone close to you, matches this description of an unsafe, premature discharge, please share your experiences with us in this short survey.

We will be issuing a report based on what people tell us. The survey should take around seven minutes to complete. Share your views here.

NICE recruiting for lay members to join its Indicators Advisory Committee

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are inviting people to join their Indicators Advisory Committee (IAC) as lay members to help drive quality improvement across health and social care. They are looking for people who can help make sure the experiences of patients, carers and service users are included in the development of NICE indicators. This may include:

- identifying major concerns of patients, carers and service users to inform committee discussions
- making sure that the views of patients, carers and service users are taken into account when the committee recommends indicators
- checking that patient/public evidence and equality issues are reflected in documents and guidance produced.

The standing lay member of this committee will play a key role in making sure that the views, experiences and interests of the public are included in the committee's decision-making. Find out more about the vacancy and apply by Friday 21 June here.

Have your say

Share your health and social care experiences

Our helpline covers all of health and social care, and we would like to hear your experiences in the NHS and social care systems. Whether your experience has been positive or one that could have been better, we'd like to hear more and see what we can do to help. Our partnership with the CQC means when you call our helpline or email us, it makes a real difference.

To get in touch with our helpline team and share your thoughts, call 020 8423 8999 on weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, or email helpline@patients-association.com. You can also visit our website to find out more about our helpline, and visit our advice and information leaflets here.

Contact our helpline

What our team is reading this week

UK not ready for a no-deal Brexit, confidential cabinet note warns

The worst places for cancer waits revealed

GP 'ghost patients' to be investigated by NHS fraud squad

Postcode lottery for speech therapy, says commissioner

Falling asleep in front of the TV could increase the risk of obesity, study finds

About us

Our vision is that health and social care will be delivered in a way that meets every person's health and social care needs.

Our mission is to give effect to the patient voice, to improve patient experience and support people to engage fully in their own care. Find out more about our values on our website.

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