



Patient Opinion Australia

PO Box 588, Everton Park, QLD 4053

T 07 3354 4525 F 07 3355 7047

E: info@patientopinion.org.au

W: www.patientopinion.org.au

18 June 2013

Sent by Email

Health and Community Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Committee,

Re: Health Ombudsman Bill 2013

Patient Opinion is a not-for-profit charitable organisation which was founded in the United Kingdom in 2006 and is now widely embedded in their National Health System. Hundreds of hospitals, mental health facilities, drug and alcohol services and other health facilities are linked-in to Britain's Patient Opinion. Recently, NHS Scotland became a subscriber to Patient Opinion in response to the Francis Report (Mid-Staffs Public Inquiry).

The Patient Opinion platform has now been introduced into Australia and was launched by the Federal Health Minister at Ipswich hospital in March 2013. Our aim is to make it safe and easy for the public to provide feedback to health services on which they rely, and in turn, encourage those services to be more open, transparent, responsive and patient-centred. Patient Opinion is about providing a platform for the public and health services to engage in constructive conversations that lead to service improvement and help our health services become the best they can be.

We commend the Health Minister's Health Ombudsman Bill 2013. We believe the proposed Bill will strengthen the public's confidence in a health system that is fair, safe and delivers high quality care.

We also believe that our platform may complement the work of the Health Ombudsman. Often, patients and their carers do not wish to make a formal complaint, but feel that it is the only way they will be heard in a health system that appears distant and difficult to engage, especially when things go wrong or could be improved. There is a dis-connect between the public and how health services listen and respond to their voice. It appears that this dis-connect is partly the reason for the new Bill.

The wider issue is that the relationship between State (and service providers) and patients (and their families) is changing under the influence of democratised voice and networked citizenry. This implies that the State and service providers need to take a much wider view of the public's feelings from saying thank-you through to litigation, and to offer both patients, clinicians and organisations a wider, lower friction set of interactions that both satisfy the public and produce change in new ways and in response to the whole range of patient input (not just complaints/dissatisfaction).

The public are questioning the value of our health system, particularly its responsiveness to their concerns in near real-time. What the public want is an opportunity to not only provide feedback to health services, but to see that their feedback has made a difference to quality of care. By giving patients this opportunity to contribute to the quality of our health services, there is a sense of change and partnership.

What Patient Opinion does is allow patients and users of the health system to tell their story on a platform that is independent, public, safe, accessible and constructive. We then get the story in near real-time to the right people in the system that can respond to the patient's story, thus demonstrating both to the patient (and the public) the health service's responsiveness and commitment to promoting high standards of practice and service delivery.

There is evidence that patients are less likely to lodge a complaint if they have an avenue, such as Patient Opinion, to tell their story and receive a response from the health service in near real-time. What this platform has the potential to do is lessen the number of complaints needed to be dealt with by the Health Ombudsman.

Patient Opinion also provides a bank of patient experience data that can be accessed by everyone at any time for free – including government, patients, service users, health services, academics, other interested organisations and the wider public.

Currently, we have engaged Local Hospital Networks (including Hospital and Health Services), as well as a number of Medicare Locals in Queensland and across the country.

We have attached some documents which provide more information about Patient Opinion.

I would be happy to further discuss our work to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

A/Professor Michael Greco
Chief Executive, Patient Opinion Australia

Attachments:

- Extract from the Francis Report (NHS Mid Staffordshire Public Inquiry)
- House of Commons Health Committee (Complaints and Litigation)
- Scottish Government news article
- West Moreton Hospital & Health Service Case Study
- Patient Opinion patient impact story (Ipswich Hospital)

THE MID STAFFORDSHIRE
NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
PUBLIC INQUIRY

Chaired by Robert Francis QC

**Report of
the Mid Staffordshire
NHS Foundation Trust
Public Inquiry**

**Volume 3:
Present and future
Annexes**

HC 898-III

3 Volumes
not to be sold
separately

Extract from the NHS Francis Report (February 2013)

This inquiry is the biggest public inquiry of the NHS since Royal Bristol Infirmary (1999).
<http://www.midstaffpublicinquiry.com/report>

Chapter 26 (p1664) has this to say about effective patient feedback and the role of **Patient Opinion** in this.

It is recognised that effective patient feedback is a powerful means of scrutinising the performance of providers in terms of safety and quality. It is encouraging to see a widening range of options being made available to the public to register their observations about the quality of care provided and to share those with others. In a society that increasingly relies on internet and social media based applications for its information, the days when it might have been justifiable to rely on a periodic conventional survey have now passed. Such a method suffers from a number of disadvantages, not least of which is that its results tend to arrive too late to be currently relevant. A consideration of the experience of Stafford, and also the positive developments in obtaining feedback that have occurred, suggest a number of principles that should be applied in this area in future:

Obtaining feedback from patients and others during an outpatient appointment or a course of inpatient treatment is desirable to offer but not a sufficient means of obtaining a true account of patient and public opinion of a service. It is quite clear that patients and their supporters can be very reluctant to raise concerns or make critical comments at a time when they feel vulnerable. That is not a reason for providers not to concern themselves in seeking out responses while patients are in hospital: to do so can demonstrate a caring attitude and foster confidence among patients and supporters to raise matters that are worrying them.

Follow-up contact with patients after the conclusion of their treatment may be productive. It appears from responses on resources such as NHS Choices that helpful comments about providers are often made shortly after the treatment episode. While patient-initiated comments are always useful and should be considered with care, a proactive system for following up patients shortly after discharge would not only be good “customer service” – it would probably provide a wider range of responses.

Publication of comments online, good and bad, is a powerful tool for patient choice and in forcing providers to address, in public, criticisms made. While making a response is not mandatory, failure to do so is likely to cause the public to draw adverse inferences.

While there are likely to be many different gateways offered through which patient and public comments can be made, it would be helpful for there to be consistency across the country in methods of access to avoid confusion, and for the output to be published in a manner allowing fair and informed comparison between organisations.

This is not intended to suggest that anything other than encouragement should be offered to impressive contributions made in this field by organisations such as Patient Opinion. The NHS should be commended for its willingness to cooperate with Patient Opinion,

exchange information with it and make use of its facilities. As was recognised by Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, however, it would be helpful if the profile of this sort of feedback facility was raised and kept in the public eye.

Results and analysis of patient feedback need to be made available to all stakeholders as near “real time” as possible, even if later adjustments have to be made.



News



Listen 

Patient stories online

19/03/2013

Patients are now able to share their experience of using Scotland's health services online.

They can be part of an independent not-for-profit website [Patient Opinion](#) following a £160,000 roll out across health boards including the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS).

[Patient Opinion](#) provides a confidential way for patients to share their healthcare experiences, good or bad, online. Comments are then passed to relevant staff who can respond or use the feedback to help change services.

The Scottish Ambulance Service participated in an initial pilot of Patient Opinion and have already used patient feedback to help shape improvements to the Patient Transport Service. This involved enhancing the response to patients with mental health care needs and highlighting positive feedback with staff across the service to share and learn from best practice examples.

Health Secretary Alex Neil said:

"We want to hear patient's stories first hand in their own words, whether it's good or bad, because it helps us to make our health services better.

"Now patients, carers and their families will be able to let health boards know, openly and publically, how a service was for them and where it can improve. And if our health professionals are doing a great job we want them to know about it.

"The best thing is, staff will receive this feedback in real-time rather than having to wait months for the results of our traditional paper surveys.

"Many of these stories can be inspirational and where our health professionals are doing a great job we want them to know about it.

"I hope it will be a more accessible way for patients and families to give their views, and will add to the tools that NHS boards already have in place to get feedback from patients.

"Every organisation takes feedback from customers very seriously and the NHS should be no different. The NHS belongs to everyone and they should have a say in how its run and what they want."

Pauline Howie, Chief Executive, Scottish Ambulance Service, said: "The Scottish Ambulance Service recognises that it's helpful for patients and carers to have a wide range of options for giving feedback on their care experience. Patient Opinion is an increasingly useful feedback channel, which is helping the Service improve patient care."

Dr Paul Hodgkin, Chief Executive of Patient Opinion, said: "Lots of people have already taken the opportunity to share their stories on Patient Opinion. We want to encourage even more people to get involved in making our health services even better by sharing their experiences and watching what happens as a result."

Tom Waterson, Chair, UNISON Scotland's Health Committee said: "Unison welcomes the Health Secretary's move to encourage "real-time" dialogue between health boards, staff and patients. Patient stories can make a difference in many ways, both to the quality of care and the morale of hard working NHS staff in their desire to deliver world class care.

"They can be powerful motivational reminders to frontline staff of how they are making a difference to someone's life and play an important role in educating the healthcare professionals of the future."



House of Commons
Health Committee

Complaints and Litigation

Sixth Report of Session 2010–12

Volume I

Report, together with formal minutes

*Oral and written evidence is contained in
Volume II*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 22 June 2011*

The full report is available online

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhealth/786/786i.pdf>

Extracts from the Report relating to Patient Opinion

Chapter 6 Complaints cultures, page 34

135. The Committee sees great value in providers constantly viewing the comments left about them on websites such as Patient Opinion and NHS Choices. The NHS can also do more to enable patients to make a complaint in an anonymous manner that can lead directly to service changes. **The Committee strongly supports the use of tools that allow patients to give feedback anonymously and that can demonstrate that changes have been made to service provision based on feedback received.**

The report concludes in recommendation no 42 – that:

42. The Committee strongly supports the use of tools that allow patients to give feedback anonymously and that can demonstrate that changes have been made to service provision based on feedback received. (Paragraph 135)

West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (WMHHS)



Case Study

Wendy Mason

Manager, Governance Risk and Partnerships
Performance, Strategy and Planning Division

Which of your departments are using Patient Opinion?

Our Emergency Department at Ipswich Hospital has been subscribed to Patient Opinion since 4 February 2013. We did this with the support of our Medicare Local – the West Moreton Oxley Medicare Local. We were the first Emergency Department in Australia to subscribe. We recently had our subscription to Patient Opinion extended to the whole of Ipswich Hospital.

How do the staff in that department encourage patients and service users to use Patient Opinion to give feedback?

We spent time promoting Patient Opinion to our Emergency Department staff before we went live. Once our staff realised the value of Patient Opinion they were keen to tell patients and visitors about it. Staff use Patient Opinion promotional material to tell people about Patient Opinion. The most popular items are the small business cards and the palm-sized brochures; probably because they are small and people can keep them in their wallet/purse or handbag.

www.patientopinion.org.au
info@patientopinion.org.au
T: 1300 662 996

West Morton Hospitals and Health Service (WMHHS)

Continued...

What kind of feedback have you received so far?

We have received a mixture of both positive and negative feedback. In all cases the feedback has been helpful. We have found that even the feedback that is negative will contain positive comments as well.

The way the site works also allows the feedback provider to comment on our response. We have experienced situations where a person provided negative feedback and then complimented us on our response.

Have you learnt anything from the patient experience stories you have received?

We have learnt a lot from the stories we've received, both the good and the bad. We've learnt more about what is important to our patients – whether it's the noise levels at night time, the appearance of our Emergency Department while it's being renovated and the importance of the way we communicate.

The other benefit of Patient Opinion is that, because it is a public forum, our responses get seen by anyone who visits the site. This means we can get information to a broader range of people than we would if we were just responding to the feedback provider.

What changes/ service improvements have been made (or do you plan to make) as a result of this feedback?

The way in which we provide feedback to our patients and their families has significantly improved since we joined Patient Opinion. Let me explain this. Our language has often been 'bureaucratic'. Our writing style on Patient Opinion focuses on listening to what the story is telling us. Our responses are informal and more personal but demonstrate that we take all feedback very seriously. The feedback on Patient Opinion helps us to continually improve our service and we recommend all health services consider using this innovative way of engaging with their community.

www.patientopinion.org.au
info@patientopinion.org.au
T: 1300 662 996



PATIENT OPINION AUST BE HEARD.

Patient experience impact story

Ipswich Hospital

West Moreton Hospital & Health Service

Patient experience story shared on Patient Opinion in March 2013

" Unhelpful and abusive staff "

About: Ipswich Hospital (Emergency Department) Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

Posted by [Yank66](#) (as *the patient*), last month

I have spent years suffering a wide variety of symptoms due to chrone's, and some symptoms that are hard to explain. I had been under the care of a doctor, until recently. I was emotionally and verbally assaulted by this doctor, in front of the whole cube, and all his subordinates, due to the frustrating inability to help explain a long term complaint of severe abdominal spasms, continuous vomiting, and profuse perspiration. This abuse includes comments made by this doctor, and various other staff at the Royal Brisbane, and the Ipswich Hospital, that I'm a drug seeking addict, all my problems are in my head, and that I attend hospital to escape my life. When told by this doctor to go elsewhere, as he had seemed to have his fill of me, I said I already had a referral to the PA and that he was surplus to my requirements, he blew his top and went off even more. I have witnesses to multiple acts of abuse towards me. I've even suffered bruising from nursing staff as they have man handled me from using showers in ER, as diversion therapy.

I believe I've been made the butt end of a long term running joke at the Ipswich ER, due to what I think is a lack of education, and uneducated assumptions about me. This treatment I have received by these hospitals have caused me to give up on any belief that there is any doctor out there that really cares, and will listen, understand, and attempt to help me, and not just worry about how my problems affect their success ratios. I am a decorated war vet, who served without thought of my own health and safety, and now when the effects of my service has caused me great suffering, I feel I am abandoned as a second rate citizen, not worth the effort, and not able to have any quality of life. I have also emailed a doctor at the Ipswich, with a recounting of my woes, as my main antagonists are located there, and have made my life such a misery, that I don't attend any hospital, I have no specialist, pain management, and no GP. I am on my own, in my own private hell, fashioned by the Royal Brisbane Hospital, i.e. the doctor from the Royal Brisbane, and then a select few of senior staff of the Ipswich ER. My quality of life is unbearable at most, and my feelings toward myself are questionable at best, as self-harm sometimes tops my list of remedies. Since I am unable to bring myself to such a cowards end, I'm just left with what I don't know, because it sure isn't a life. Thanks Qld Health and your authorised representatives.

STORY HAS A RESPONSE



This story has had [3 responses](#)

 Published by Patient Opinion on 3/04/2013

This story has been viewed by public users on this site **306** times

[Moderate this story](#)

Story summary

What's good?

- [No good](#)

What could be improved?

- [A&E](#)
- [doctor care](#)
- [education](#)

Initial feelings: [frustrating](#) and [Lack of care](#)

Activity

11 [staff members have read this story](#)

- ▶ 6 at West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local
- ▶ 1 at Patient Opinion Australia
- ▶ 2 at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
- ▶ 1 at Metro North Hospital and Health Service
- ▶ 1 at West Moreton Hospital & Health Service

Responses

Response from District Coordinator Consumer Liaison, Performance Strategy Planning , WMHHS on 3/04/2013 at 6:54 AM

Thank you for making contact and drawing to our attention the concerns you have with the treatment you have received at the Ipswich Hospital Emergency Department.

We are so very sorry to hear that you have been made to feel that your condition is not important to us, and that you have come away from our hospital feeling like you have no help available to you. We are very concerned about the treatment you described, and wish to do all we can to make sure you have the care and support you need.

Thank you for agreeing to allow us to make contact with you and organise the necessary support to address each of the concerns you have raised.

We will stay in contact and work with you to make sure you feel your issues have been heard and addressed to your satisfaction.

Consumer Liaison Service

West Moreton Hospital and Health Service

Response from Patient Opinion Australia on 22/04/2013 at 6:33 AM

The following response has been posted by Patient Opinion on behalf of the Metro North Hospital and Health Service.

The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital has a Patient Liaison Service, to work closely with patients to investigate complaints.

The RBWH encourages all patients who have concerns to contact the Patient Liaison Service on email

RBWH-Patient_Liaison_Service@health.qld.gov.au

or telephone 07 3646 8216 so that any concerns can be investigated.

Update posted by [Yank66](#) (the patient) on 26/04/2013 at 12:17 AM

I think the above response by the Metro North Hospital and Health Service to be a typical response of avoidance of a real problem. I believe if in house procedure and chain of command worked, a public airing of concerns would not have been necessary. So now you have my complaint, in writing, what else do you need to make your enquiries? I will keep it under public scrutiny, as I believe that is the only way, so far, to get a good look at my symptoms, chronos related or not. I still suffer, and no matter how mad your senior staff may get, and call me names, and accuse of mental and drug seeking problems, only takes away from a real life concern for me. I live with it, and through it. I dare any of your so called experts to live just one of my most painful and sick days, and see if they would not fight tooth and nail for relief, at the least.

Patient provides additional feedback to Ipswich Hospital

" Help gratefully received (Ipswich Hospital) "

About: Ipswich Hospital (Emergency Department)

Posted by [Yank66](#) (as *the patient*), last month

I am at present at the Ipswich Hospital, and since my last patient opinion, have received top notch treatment. The Ipswich Hospital has now positively progressed in helping me cope with some horrendous pain and vomiting. I'm sorry that it took a public forum to achieve this effect, but thank goodness for Patient Opinion, and a big thank you to Dr. Jane Hoare, and the staff from the ER, to the nurses and doctors on the ward. It's amazing how far a little understanding, and good communication, can take you. Thank you once again Patient Opinion and the Ipswich Hospital.

Responses

Response from WMHHS on 18/04/2013 at 5:10 AM

Dear Yank 66

We are so pleased to receive your message.

You have been through a lot! We are glad to hear the staff were able to help with your pain and vomiting. This must have been a very difficult time for you.

It's particularly important for us to receive your feedback of our staff. Dr Jane Hoare is one of our most experienced physicians and we were delighted to pass on your feedback. She was touched by your sentiments, so a big thank you!

We also passed your message to the staff of the Emergency Department at Ipswich Hospital. The staff in our Emergency Department work hard and always seek to provide the best possible care. We think they are great and we are very glad to hear you think so too!

We agree, a little understanding and good communication can go a long way. Your feedback reminded us of why this is so important.

Thank you for taking the time to use Patient Opinion and we wish you the best possible health.

Kind regards

Consumer Liaison Service

West Moreton Hospital and Health Service

Phone 3810 1111

STORY HAS A RESPONSE



This story has had [a response](#)

Published by Patient Opinion on 15/04/2013

This story has been viewed by public users on this site **176** times

[Moderate this story](#)

Story summary

What's good?

- [care](#)
- [doctors](#)
- [Marked improvement for me and my health issues](#)
- [service](#)

What could be improved?

- [accurate dissemination of information to patients](#)

Initial feelings: [amazing](#) and [thank you](#)

Activity

- 6 [staff members have read this story](#)
 - ▶ 6 at West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local