

The Patients Association was founded in 1963 and continues to listen to patients and speak up for change.

<http://us5.campaign-archive1.com/?u=9dd6577cf3f36af3c2f6682ed&id=9ea1b134c6&e=0eb50ab746>

** Weekly News

Keeping you informed about the latest developments in healthcare

Patient Safety in Primary Care survey

The Patients Association is conducting a survey on what is important to patients in relation to their safety when accessing services in primary care - that is the care you receive from your GP (family doctor) or the nurse at your local doctor's practice, as well as the care from your local pharmacist.

We invite all our readers to complete this survey, which can be accessed by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KTNXCWS>

We appreciate your contribution as your feedback will help us get a clearer picture of how effective these services currently are, and what can be done to improve them further.

Standards of foreign doctors in the NHS

A study conducted by University College London has revealed that the majority of foreign doctors working in the NHS are not as competent as their British counterparts.

The study

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/nhs/10773857/Half-of-foreign-doctors-are-below-British-standards.html>)

, commissioned by the General Medical Council and carried out by UCL, concluded that the majority of the 88,000 foreign doctors working in the UK would fail exams if they were held to the same standard as their British colleagues.

The authors of the report have called for the pass rate of the competency exam to be raised from 63 to 76 per cent to "ensure patient safety".

Commenting on patient safety and the standard of the Professional and Linguistics Assessments Board exam, Katherine Murphy, Chief Executive of the Patients Association (<http://www.patients-association.com/default.aspx>), said:

"Many hundreds of doctors from other countries around the world make a valuable and important contribution to healthcare in the UK. However, it is essential that all staff in the NHS are fully qualified to carry out the work that they are employed to do; and that they are trained to the highest possible standards.

"By having different standards for foreign doctors in PLAB exams, there will be variation in the quality of care received by patients based on which doctor is treating them. Such variations are unacceptable and do not give much confidence to patients and their relatives"

18 week NHS target breached

The NHS has breached the target for 90 per cent of admitted patients to start treatment within 18 weeks

(<http://www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Rightsandpledges/Waitingtimes/Pages/Guide%20to%20waiting%20times.aspx>)

for the first time since 2011, the latest figures from NHS England reveal.

Waiting lists lengthened over the winter as NHS trusts cancelled planned operations to care for critically ill flu patients, but are likely to increase still further as health authorities begin in earnest to make savings of £20billion over the next four years.

Only 89.9 per cent of admitted patients started treatment within 18 weeks in February. However, the non-admitted and incomplete pathway targets of 95 per cent and 92 per cent were met at 96.3 per cent and 93.5 per cent respectively.

Responding, Katherine Murphy of the Patients Association said:

"We are concerned that the NHS has breached the target for 90 per cent of admitted patients to start treatment within 18 weeks. For many patients the wait to receive elective care can be both frustrating and daunting, and it is crucial that the 18-week waiting time standard is adhered to.

"For months we have been hearing from callers to our Helpline that they have been waiting longer for tests, results and treatments; all of which leads to considerable anxiety and stress. Every extra day wait for treatment means more pain and discomfort for patients."

We would like to hear your views:

Have you been waiting longer than 18 weeks for treatment over the past few months? What impact has this had on you?

Email us your thoughts: mailbox@patients-association.com

(<mailto:mailbox@patients-association.com>)

Care Quality Commission (<http://www.cqc.org.uk/>) (CQC) to probe end of life care

The Care Quality Commission is set to launch an investigation into inequalities in end of life care.

The announcement of the investigation

(<http://www.hsj.co.uk/news/cqc-to-probe-end-of-life-care/5070115.article>)

comes after well-documented evidence that particular groups experience poorer quality care at the end of life, and that the care they receive does not always meet their needs.

The investigation will examine the experience of patients with learning

disabilities, mental health needs and dementia, as well as people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. People from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities will also have their experiences taken into account, with the investigation also considering geographical variations in the quality of care.

Recruitment drive to 'bring back compassion'

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/nhs/10775103/Review-of-nurse-training-to-bring-back-compassion.html>)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced a review of training and a drive to recruit older workers with more 'life experience', saying that nurses must learn to be more compassionate.

Mr Hunt said changes were necessary to tackle scandalous failings in care and to ensure that treating patients with respect and dignity becomes the top priority of all staff: "The NHS stands for compassionate care or it stands for nothing – and we know that for many patients, compassionate nursing makes all the difference.

"The central lesson of the Francis Report

(<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN06690/the-francis-report-report-of-the-midstaffordshire-nhs-foundation-trust-public-inquiry-and-the-governments-response>)

into the tragic events of Mid Staffs

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stafford_Hospital_scandal) is the need to treat patients with respect and dignity".

Call for a Minister for Complaints

Last week we asked our e-members if they thought a designated minister for complaints would improve the complaints handling process in the NHS.

We received many responses, with members divided on the issue. While members generally agreed that an independent complaints process should exist within the NHS, there was a great deal of scepticism that a minister for complaints would improve the situation.

Some members saw the potential behind a minister for complaints, arguing that the current Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) system is ineffectual and that a complete overhaul of the complaints process is desperately required. Many members are concerned that the appointment of a complaints minister would be backed up by a team of bureaucrats, making an already cumbersome complaints process even more long-winded.

About Us

The Patients Association's motto is 'Listening to Patients, Speaking up for Change'. This motto is the basis on which we build all our campaigns. Via our Helpline, we capture stories about Healthcare from over thousands of patients, family members and carers every year. We use this knowledge to campaign for real improvements to health and social care services across the UK. In addition, our Helpline provides valuable signposting and information for patients and supports them as they navigate the Healthcare service.

** Our Helpline

The Patients Association Helpline – 0845 608 44 55 – is there to help.

This is a local rate number and if a phone provider charges, we are happy to return calls. The Helpline both informs patients and gathers their views. We are of course available online, providing advice, the latest health news, signposting to further information and general advice.

You can also email us at helpline@patients-association.com

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