

MEDIA RELEASE

Greater hospital transparency will empower consumers to make better healthcare decisions

hirmaa, the industry body representing 18 not-for-profit, community based and member-owned health insurance funds, has called for greater transparency over the performance of both public and private hospitals.

“Openness and transparency around the performance of public and private hospitals is woefully inadequate with consumers being left in the dark.”

“There are over 1,300 public and private hospitals in Australia, treating millions of patients each year and yet the availability of timely data on key performance indicators such as infection rates, cleanliness, nurse to patient ratios, hospital errors and waiting times at an individual hospital level is simply not available.”

“When it comes to something as important as health, consumers have every right to demand information on individual hospital performance.”

“Without timely and consistent information, consumers simply cannot make an informed choice when it comes to choosing a hospital.”

“We know that not all hospitals are the same and when a person’s health is on the line, full transparency over the quality of care should be non-negotiable.”

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare concedes that limited information is available on the safety and quality of care in hospitals, noting that “the available information does not provide a complete picture” and that in both private and public hospitals “there is no routinely available information on some aspects of quality, such as the continuity or responsiveness of hospital services.”¹

“We live in age where information can be easily collected and shared” says Matthew Koce.

“Hospitals need to move with the times. They need to accept that consumers living in the digitally and socially networked age of the Internet expect fast and efficient access to useful data, data that empowers them to make informed choices around their care and that of their loved ones.”

“We should be questioning why patients are not being provided with the option of an online portal to publically share their experiences and feedback on a hospital stay. Surely this is a pre-requisite if the health system is genuinely interested in patient-centric care.”

“Greater transparency around the performance of hospitals is crucial to genuine competition and consumer choice. There is no doubt that Australia is falling behind other developed nations already publishing real-time online information about hospital performance and launching innovative consumer tools.”

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australian hospital statistics 2012-13: private hospitals*; p.44

The National Health System in the United Kingdom has launched 'My NHS' across all hospitals. The system provides highly accessible performance information on a range of healthcare providers, while free Wi-Fi in all hospitals will allow patients to provide real-time feedback on the quality of their care.

Openness, transparency and accountability will benefit the end consumer by empowering them to make informed choices around their care and enhancing competition across providers to deliver even higher standards of care.

hirmaa suggests that:

- Consistent, regular and mandatory reporting frameworks should be in place for all hospitals to provide transparency and allow benchmarking around performance, pricing and the consumer experience for the benefit of the public and policy makers.
- Real-time patient feedback on hospital performance should be shared through the Internet
- All patient records should be digital and in an interoperable format and belong to the patient

hirmaa is the peak industry body for eighteen private health insurers which are member-owned and not-for-profit. In all, the hirmaa funds provide private health insurance for over one million Australians. A complete list of hirmaa funds is available at http://hirmaa.com.au/member_funds .

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