

# **Patient complaint management – the faces of change**

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## **Objective:**

To describe in detail the methods used to drive a strategy for change in how patient complaints were received within a busy ED.

## **Background:**

The project was undertaken in an outer metropolitan hospital with a single site Emergency Department (ED). Both the hospital and the ED has been undergoing transformation since the appointment of a new executive team. Patient complaints have been traditionally been seen as negative and pushed to be resolved externally from the ED. Staff are not well trained in complaint resolution, and despite a hospital system for processing of complaints being in place for many years the ED nursing leadership team saw opportunity to improve and revolutionise how complaints were both viewed by staff and how they were processed.

## **Method:**

A review of the current complaint management system was undertaken by the ED nursing leadership team. In conjunction with a redesign initiative also being undertaken in the ED at the same time, the opportunity was taken to scope a new system that allowed patients and or their relatives to give ‘real time’ feedback. The NUM’s embarked on a benchmarking exercise with other institutions and engaged the Patient Experience Office and its staff in assistance in improving the system for our patients and their families. Draft documents were sent out to key stakeholders, including patients and families, regarding signage to be placed in the ED to assist patients and their families to raise issues or concerns regarding their care or experience in the ED. The NUM’s then engaged the People and Culture unit to facilitate training with the nursing management team in how to effectively respond to patient feedback.

## **Results:**

There has been a significant reduction in patient complaints. In May 2014 we received 4 serious complaints and 12 minor complaints compared to May 2015 where we received 0 serious complaints and 22 minor complaints. ED staff are now proactively solving patient complaints and or feedback in ‘real time’ which is reflected in and improvement in our patient satisfaction surveys.

## **Conclusion:**

Creating a culture amongst staff that all patient feedback is valuable in ensuring that we promote patient centred care is a strong quality improvement strategy. By facilitating nurses through training with the knowledge and skills needed to manage feedback from patients can aid in reducing serious complaints.