Learning from Positive Patient and Parental Feedback through a Safety-II Lens

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Background

Safety in healthcare is often defined by its failures, not its successes. By examining positive feedback from patients and caregivers, we aimed to capture Safety-II in action and identify the behaviours that underpin high-quality care in our Children's Emergency Department.

"As soon as I informed the nurse of his condition, she promptly brought us to a low stimulus room, which made a world of difference. This small but thoughtful gesture helped my son stay calm and prevented a potential meltdown."

Methods

We completed a retrospective qualitative review of all voluntarily submitted compliments from February 2024 to April 2025.

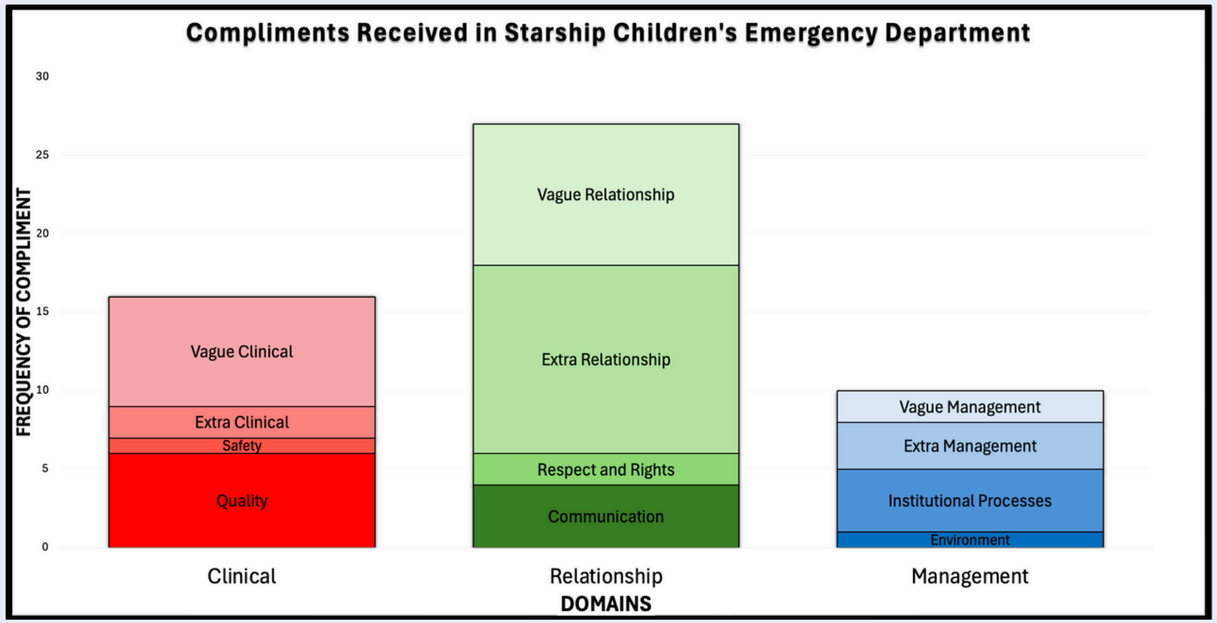
- 21 compliments in total
- One from a patient and 20 from family members
- Submitted via email or handwritten forms

Compliments were manually analysed using the adapted Healthcare Complaints Analysis Tool (HCAT)[1]. They were coded under the domains ***Clinical***, ***Relationship***, and ***Management***, with further sub-coding to identify specific behaviours.

Results

- 90% of the compliments highlighted relational aspects of care
- 66% complimented clinical care
- 43% mentioned management or environmental factors.

The most frequent praise was for **'extra' relationship** behaviour, staff perceived to go beyond formal duties to comfort or connect with patients and families.



"It seemed like a super busy time for the whole department and we were not an urgent case but she took the time to check in with us and was so kind and calm, amid the chaos of a Saturday night in ED"

Insights

- Compliments from patients and families are a **rich source of learning**.
- Even with a small sample (21 compliments), a clear pattern emerged: **personal**, **patient-centred** interactions are central to perceptions of high-quality care.
- Patient and parental feedback acts as a **"mirror"** to our **"work-as-done"**, highlighting behaviour that often goes unrecognised.
- Positive feedback shows ***what goes right*** in healthcare.
- **Safety-II** helps identify **human-centred practices** that sustain high-quality care.
- Recognising these adaptive behaviours supports **safer**, **kinder** systems.

[1] Gillespie A, Reader TW. The healthcare complaints analysis tool: development and reliability testing of a method for service monitoring and organisational learning. BMJ Qual Saf. 2016;25:937–46.