

MEDIA RELEASE

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Emojis improving how hospital staff interact with young patients

For many children and adolescents, hospitals can be an overwhelming place where their thoughts and feelings can be overshadowed by confusing conversations about their treatment and care.

However, one hospital has introduced the use of emojis on patient communication boards as a way for young patients and their families to communicate their feelings with treating health professionals.

Hundreds of nurses, nursing students and health professionals from around Australia attending the Australian College of Nursing's (ACN) National Nursing Forum at The Events Centre, The Star, Sydney, heard today how staff at The Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick worked with adolescent patients to co-design a communication board.

Emojis were suggested by one patient and enthusiastically supported by other patients as a common communication tool. Emojis that patients could use to show their feelings included happy, sad, teary, and angry graphics, but could also use graphics to show wheelchairs, x-rays, tablets as well as food and drink they may desire.

"We have found that the emojis prompt a conversation with and between the patient and/or family, which may be difficult to initiate with words, and is especially significant for those young people who are unable to express their needs and feelings verbally," Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick Clinical Nurse Educator Maria Brien told the Forum.

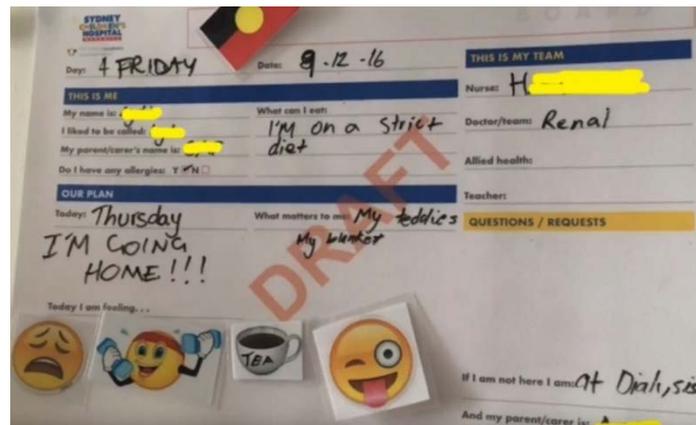
"In doing this, we have modelled how the patient voice is not only about words, and changed how nurses interact with young people," Ms Brien and co-speaker, Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick Quality Officer Laurel Mimmo, informed the Forum.

"The boards are an opportunity to show how children and adolescents can be actively engaged in the co-production and implementation of a change to improve the hospital experience for children and young people."

ACN Chief Executive Officer, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN, said: "The aim of the communication board is so patients can visually communicate with health professionals about what matters to them and what is important regarding their care. This is an important component of person-centred care," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

"Using innovative communication tools such as emojis that would appeal to younger patients makes the hospital setting less intimidating and gives younger patients a real sense that what they have to say is important and matters."

The National Nursing Forum is ACN’s signature annual event bringing together hundreds of nurses, students and health professionals from around Australia to discuss how to *Make Change Happen* for the benefit of patients and communities. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from respected health care leaders, senior decision-makers and Members of Parliament.



Above: A patient communication board showing the use of emojis.

-ENDS-

For interviews contact ACN Executive Assistant Narelle Barrie on 0450 908 920 or Kristen Connell on 0400 054 227.

Notes to Editors: The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national professional organisation for all nurse leaders and its aim is to ensure that the Australian community receives quality nursing care now and in the future. ACN is a membership organisation with members in all states and territories, health care settings and nursing specialties. ACN is also the Australian member of the International Council of Nurses headquartered in Geneva. An organisation not afraid to challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia’s health care, ACN is a well-connected and educated national body that drives change with people of influence to enhance the delivery of health services to the Australian community. ACN’s membership includes nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics and researchers.

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