

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Making connections – Supporting a better health system for everyone

Patient Ombudsman’s 2021/22 annual report highlights the strain patients, caregivers and health care providers have been under, with a growing number of complaints focusing on staffing issues, access to care, and a lack of courtesy and respect.

TORONTO, March 7, 2023 – In its latest annual report, Patient Ombudsman shares complaints data from 2021/22, and reflects on the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic continues to strain Ontario’s health care system.

The pandemic continues to be an important factor in the complaints Patient Ombudsman receives. While quality of care continued to be the top complaint for both long-term care homes and public hospitals, Patient Ombudsman noted a 43% increase in the number of patients and caregivers who reported that they were treated with a lack of sensitivity, caring, courtesy or respect at hospitals, particularly in emergency departments.

In addition to looking at complaints data, the report shares patient stories that touch on issues of growing concern, including increased number of negative interactions with hospital security; discharging vulnerable patients from hospital to long-term care; and the stresses to the health care system seen in our emergency rooms. The report also provides an update on two issues examined in previous reports: concerns related to sexual assault and lost property.

Key Highlights:

- Patient Ombudsman **received 3,306 total complaints** in 2021-22.
- **3,291 complaints were resolved**, including complaints carried over from the previous year.
- **1,256 people were referred** to patient relations staff at health sector organizations, including 200 courtesy calls to facilitate a warm hand-off.
- 22% of complaints are about health care settings outside of Patient Ombudsman’s jurisdiction, and Patient Ombudsman made 300 referrals to health regulatory colleges.

“The pandemic has placed a huge strain not only on our health system, but on individuals themselves. Despite the challenges, our office continues to work with complainants and health organizations to find fair resolutions and to support patients and caregivers as they try to navigate a complex health care system. It is inspiring to see so many patients, caregivers and health sector organizations working to ensure others have more positive experiences.”

– **Craig Thompson, Patient Ombudsman**

Who We Are

Patient Ombudsman’s role is to receive, respond to and help resolve complaints from patients, residents and caregivers about their experiences in Ontario’s public hospitals, long-term care homes, and Home and Community Care Support Services organizations. Patient Ombudsman can also investigate issues that relate to matters of public interest. We take the time to listen closely to all perspectives without taking sides. Our work aims to improve the system for everyone by shining a light on issues of concern.

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