



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia

Report on Statewide Complaint Data Collected Under the WA Complaint Management Policy

1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004

*Office of Safety and Quality in Health Care
December 2004*

Introduction

Area Health Services in Western Australia are accountable for ensuring the delivery of safe and quality health care to the Western Australian community.

In November 2001, a Statewide Clinical Governance Framework was introduced in the Western Australian health system. This framework provides a 'systematic and integrated approach to assurance and review of clinical responsibility and accountability that improves quality and safety resulting in optimal patient outcomes'.¹

Complaint management is an integral component of the WA Clinical Governance Framework and is linked to other elements of the Clinical Governance Framework and quality improvement – including continuing professional development, audit, risk management and incident monitoring and reporting.

In July 2003, the Department of Health released the Western Australian Complaints Management Policy: Driving Quality Improvement by Effective Complaints Management. The Policy was developed to assist Area Health Services to improve their complaint management processes and to ensure a consistent method of complaints management, and monitoring and reporting across the Western Australian health system. The WA complaints management system has two primary objectives:

- ◆ The **effective management of individual complaints** – to ensure that all complaints are effectively resolved in a consistent and just manner; and
- ◆ The **facilitation of service improvements** – to ensure that the information gathered via complaints is being systematically recorded, reported and utilised to improve the deliver of services to customers and to prevent recurring problems.

In financial year 2003-2004 the Office of Safety and Quality in Health Care collected and analysed aggregated Statewide complaints data from the following Area Health Services in WA on a quarterly basis:

- Breast Screen WA (BSWA)
- Dental Health Service (DHS)
- East Metropolitan Health Service (EMHS)
- Goldfields and South East Health Region (G&SEHR)
- Great Southern Health Region (GSHR)
- Kimberley Health Region (KHR)
- Midwest and Murchison Health Region (M&MHR)
- North Metropolitan Health Service (NMHS)
- Pilbara and Gascoyne Health Region (P&GHR)
- South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS)
- South West Area Health Service (SWAHS)
- Wheatbelt Health Region (WHR)
- Women's and Children's Health Service (W&CHS)

This report provides an aggregated summary of complaints made to WA public hospitals between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004. The aggregated Complaint data has been categorised into nine major categories; **Access, Communication, Decision Making, Quality of Care, Costs, Rights, Respect and Dignity, Grievances, Corporate Services, and Professional Conduct.**

The Office of Safety and Quality in Health Care thanks each of the contributing health services for their contribution to the development of this report.

¹ Department of Health (2003). Introduction to Clinical Governance – A Background Paper.
<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/safetyandquality>

RESULTS

Total Complaints

In financial year 2003-2004 (between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004), a total of **4,330** complaint issues were received by Health Services in Western Australia. The highest number of complaint issues were recorded at: East Metropolitan Health Service (n=991, 22.8%), South Metropolitan Health Service (n=842, 19.4%), North Metropolitan Health Service (n=833, 19.2%), Women's and Children's Health Service (n=651, 18.2%) and Pilbara and Gascoyne Health Region (n=214, 4.9%).

Figure 1 provides a comparative breakdown of quarterly complaint issues recorded by each Area Health Service in Western Australia between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004.

FIGURE 1: Comparative Breakdown of Complaints by Area Health Service in 2003-2004

Metropolitan Area Health Services

In financial year 2003-2004 Metropolitan Area Health Services recorded a total of **3,564** (82%) complaint issues. This represents a 9.4% increase on the **3,257** complaint issues they recorded in financial year 2002/2003. Figure 2 provides a comparative trend of complaint issues received by metropolitan health services between financial years 1999-2000 and 2003-2004. Note: Comparable data is not available for the WA Country Health Services and South West Area Health Service.

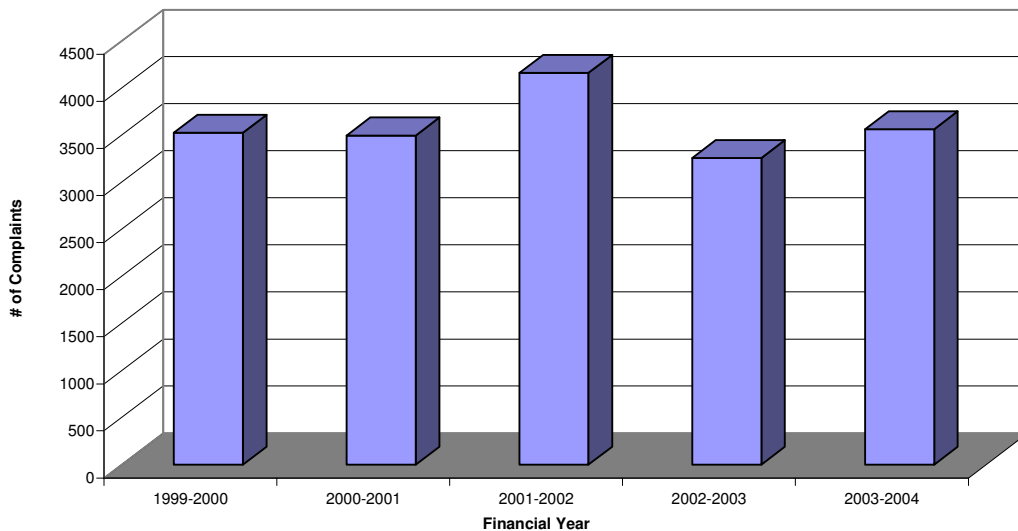


FIGURE 2: Total complaint issues in Metropolitan Area Health Services, 1999/2000 to 2003-2004

Breakdown of Complaints by Metropolitan Area Health Services

Of the **3,257** complaint issues recorded by Metropolitan Area Health Services in financial year 2002/2003, the top 5 complaint issues were recorded at: Royal Perth Hospital (n=752, 21%), Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (n=671, 18.8%), Women's and Children's Health Service (n=651, 18.2%), Fremantle Hospital and Health Service (n=350, 9.8%) and Peel & Rockingham Kwinana Health Service (n=320, 8.8%).

Figure 3 provides a quarterly breakdown of complaint issues by complaint category for each Metropolitan Area Health Service between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004.

The increase in the number of complaint issues recorded by Women's and Children's Health Service in the 3rd quarter of 2003-2004 was attributable to concerns raised by the community about the quality of care at King Edward Memorial Hospital, following the establishment of an Inquiry in February 2004. The complaint policy at Women's and Children's Health Service treats each expression of concern or comment received from the community as a complaint issue.

Peel & Rockingham Kwinana Health Service recorded an increased number of complaint issues in the 4th quarter of 2003-2004. Of the 320 (8.8%) complaints recorded, 100 related to the redevelopment of the Emergency Department at Rockingham District Hospital (refer to Figure 21). Since completion the complaint rate has reduced significantly (n=111 ytd 2004/2005, only 9 of which relate to redevelopment of health care facilities).

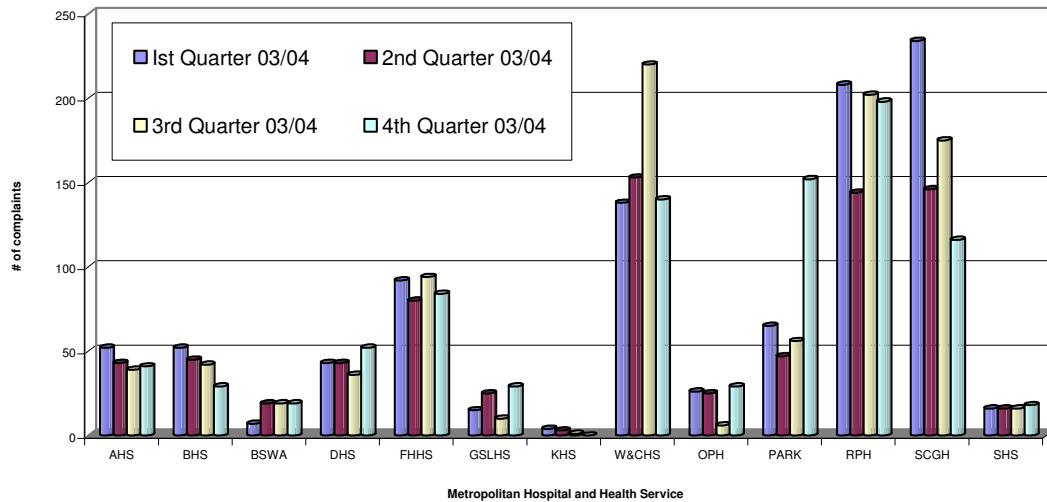


FIGURE 3: Breakdown of Complaints Issues by Metropolitan Health Services in 2003-2004

Breakdown of Complaints by Country Health Services

Country Health Services in WA recorded a total of 775 complaint issues (18%) in financial year 2003-2004 (See Figure 4). For comparative purposes, the above data includes complaint issues recorded by South West Area Health Service, even though the South West Area Health Service is a separate reporting entity to the six Health Regions that make up the WA Country Health Service.

Pilbara and Gascoyne Health Region recorded 214 (27.6%) complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. Goldfields and South East Health Region recorded 196 (25.2%) complaint issues, whilst Midwest and Murchison Health Region recorded 95 (12.2%) complaint issues and Great Southern Health Region recorded 84 (10.8%) complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. South West Area Health Service recorded 16% (n=125) of complaint issues recorded by Country Health Service regions in 2003-2004.

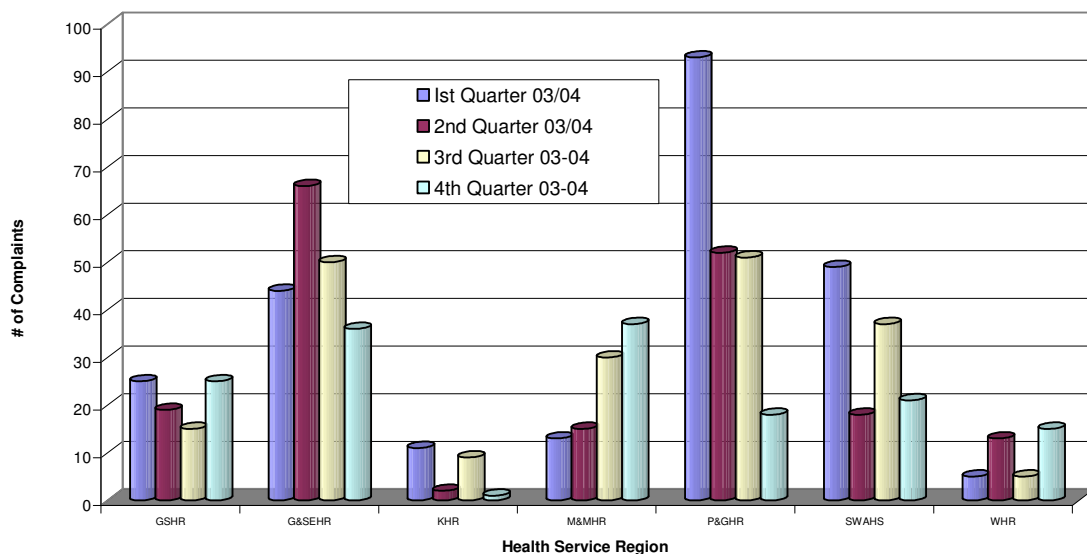


FIGURE 4: Breakdown of Complaint Issues by Country Health Service Region in 2003-2004

New Complainants

In financial year 2003-2004 there was a total of **3,081** new complainants to the WA public hospital system. Figure 5 provides a comparative breakdown of new complainants recorded by each Health Service in Western Australia between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004.

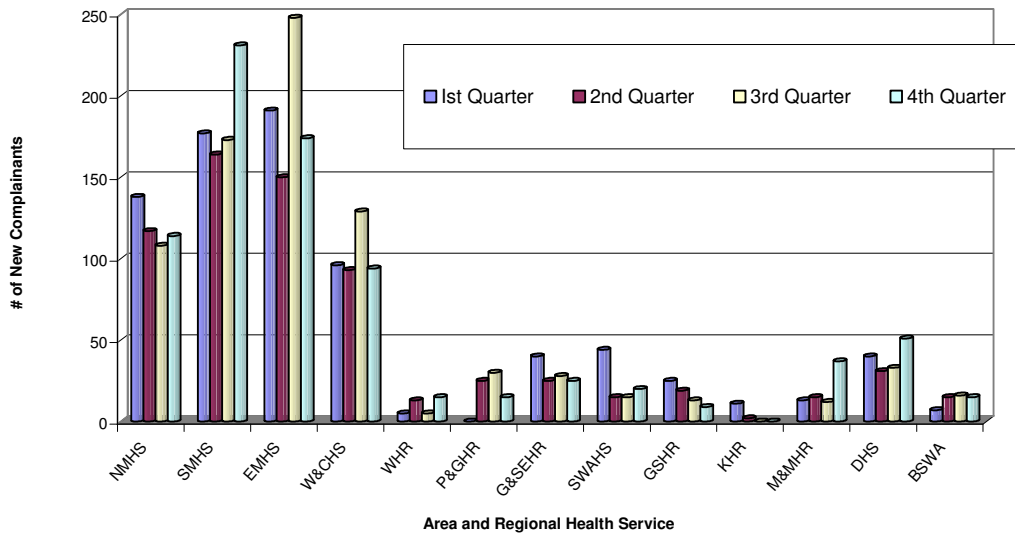


FIGURE 5: Comparative Breakdown of New Complainants by Area Health Service in 2003-2004

Principal Complaint Categories

In financial year 2003-2004, the top five complaint categories were: **'Quality of Care'** (n=1021, 23.6%); **'Access'** (n=1012, 23.4%); **'Rights, Respect and Dignity'** (n=820, 18.9%); **'Communication'** (n=723, 16.7%); and **'Corporate Services'** (n=420, 9.7%). Figure 6 shows provides a breakdown of complaint issues by major complaint category in financial year 2003-2004.

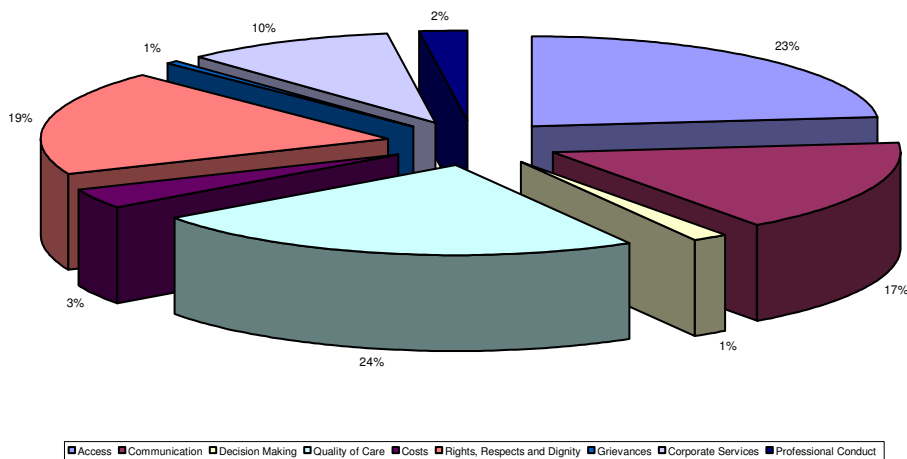


FIGURE 6: Breakdown of complaint issues by major complaint category in financial year 2003-2004

Principal Complaint Categories by Health Service

Figure 7 shows provides a breakdown of the major complaint categories by Health Service in financial year 2003-2004.

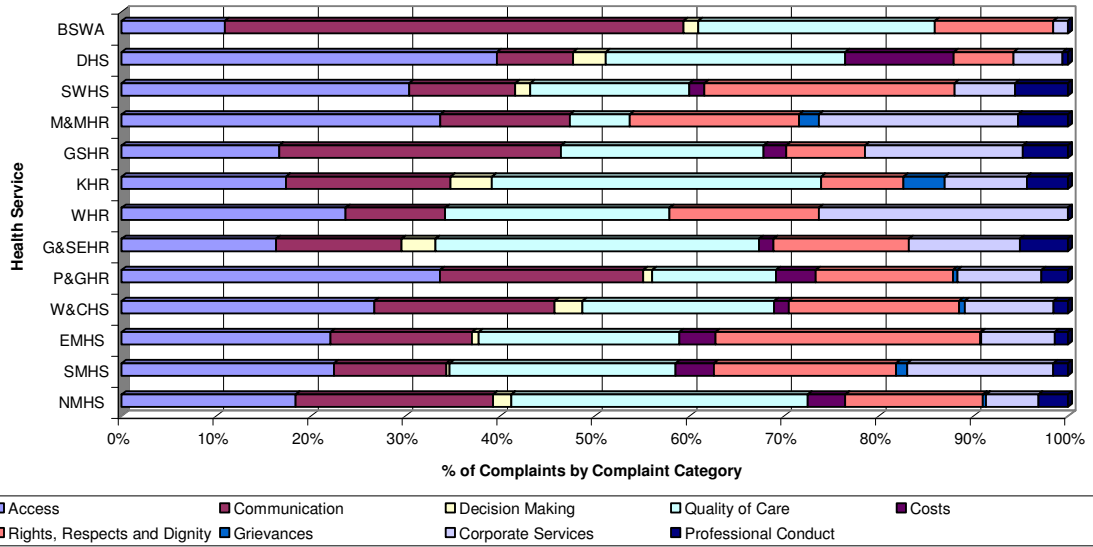


FIGURE 7: Overview of Complaint issues by Principal Complaint Category in 2003-2004

Top 21 complaints received as a proportion of each major category

A breakdown of the top 21 complaint issues recorded by Health Services is provided below. The top 21 complaint issues refer to those complaints scoring more than 10% of the overall complaint issues recorded in each of the major complaint categories.

Quality of Clinical Care

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Inadequate Diagnosis/Observation	231	22.6
Inadequate Treatment/Therapy	355	34.7

Access

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Delay in Admission/Treatment	245	24.2
Waiting List Delay	168	16.6
Inadequate or No Service	286	28.3
Discharge or Transfer Arrangements	142	14

Rights, Respect and Dignity

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Inconsiderate Service/Lack of Courtesy	389	47.4
Absence of Caring	223	27.2

Communications

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Misinformation or Failure in Communication	199	27.5
Inadequate Communication	96	13.3
Inappropriate Verbal/Non Verbal Communication	172	23.8
Failure to Listen to Patient/Carer/Family	113	15.6

Corporate Services

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Administrative Practice	132	31.4
Facilities	185	44

Costs

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Amount Charged	20	13.2
Lost Property and/or Reimbursement	83	55

Professional Conduct

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Inadequacy of Records	16	16.5
Unprofessional Conduct	54	55.7

Decision Making

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Failure to Consult Patient/Client	28	43.7
Public/Private Choice	13	20

Grievances

Complaint Issue	Total Complaints	%
Inadequate Response to a Complaint	21	95.5

Quality of Care

'Quality of Care' relates to the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of clinical care by health professionals.

In financial year 2003-2004, there was a total of 1021 (25.3%) 'Quality of Care' complaint issues received by Health Services in Western Australia. The most common complaint issues related to 'Inadequate Treatment/Therapy' (n=355, 34.7%), 'Inadequate Diagnosis/Observation' (n=231, 22.6%), 'Pain Issues' (n=82, 8%), 'Medication Issues' (n=79, 7.7%) and 'Poor Co-ordination of Treatment' (n=78, 7.6%). Figure 8 provides a breakdown of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues recorded in financial year 2003-2004.

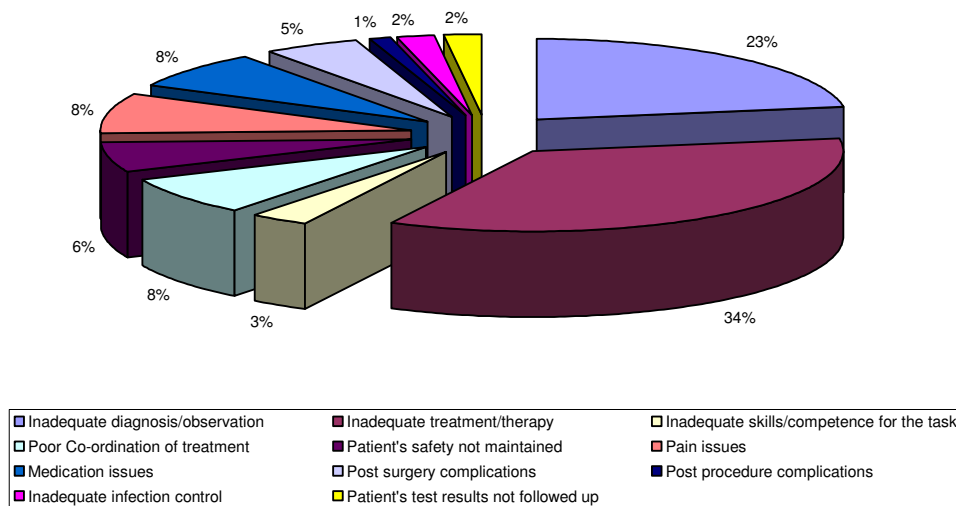


FIGURE 8: Breakdown of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues in 2003-2004

Figure 9 and Figure 10 provide a breakdown of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in 2003-2004. The increase in the number of complaint issues recorded by Women's and Children's Health Service in the 3rd quarter of 2003-2004 was attributable to the community coming forward in February 2004 to raise concerns about the quality of care at King Edward Memorial Hospital. The complaint policy at Women's and Children's Health Service treats each expression of concern or comment received from the community as a complaint issue.

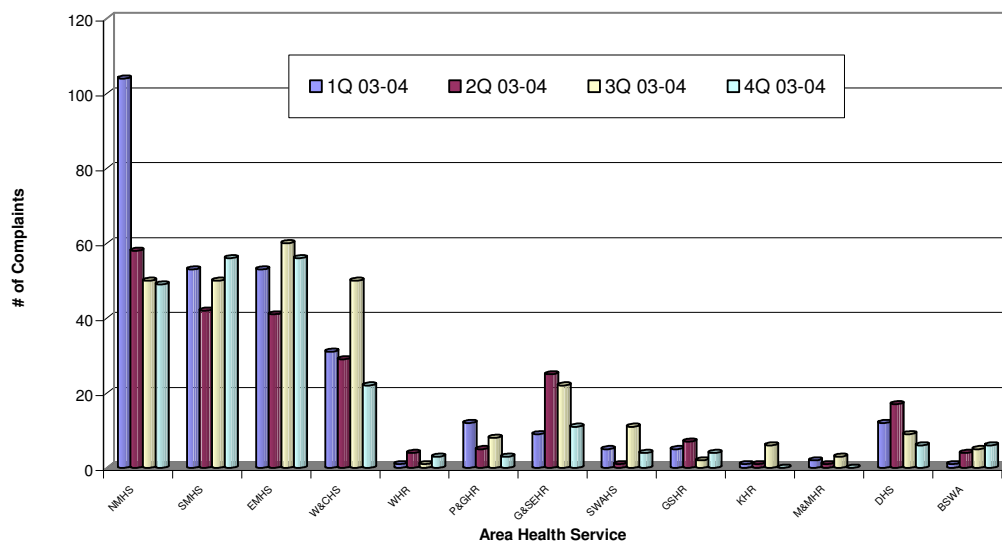


FIGURE 9: Number of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

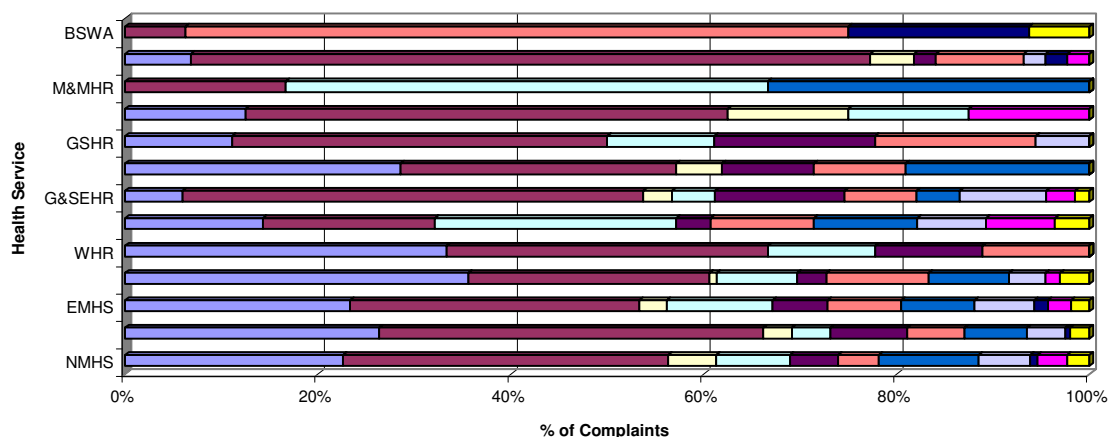


FIGURE 10: Breakdown of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues by Area Health Services in 2003-2004.

Metropolitan Area Health Services

There was a total of 874 (84.6%) 'Quality of Care' complaint issues received by Metropolitan Area Health Services in financial year 2003-2004. This represents an increase of 23% from financial year 2002-2003. The three metropolitan Area Health Services that recorded the highest 'Quality of Care' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004 were North Metropolitan Health Service (n=261, 25.5%), East Metropolitan Health Service (n=210, 20.5%) and South Metropolitan Health Service (n= 201, 19.7%). The most common 'Quality of Care' complaint issues recorded by the above Health Services related to:

Complaint Issue	NMHS		EMHS		SMHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inadequate Diagnosis/Observation	59	22.6	49	23	53	26
Inadequate Treatment/Therapy	88	33.7	63	30	80	39

Country Area Health Services

The WA Country Health Service received 136 (13.3%) of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. The three WA Country Health Service Regions with the highest 'Quality of Care' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004 were Goldfields and South East Health Region (n=67, 6.5%), Pilbara Gascoyne Health Region (n=28, 2.7%) and Great Southern Health Region (n=18, 1.7%). South West Area Health Service recorded 21 (2%) of 'Quality of Care' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. The most common 'Quality of Care' complaint issues recorded by the above Health Services related to:

Complaint Issue	G&SEHR		P&GHR		GSHR		SWAHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inadequate Diagnosis/Observation	4	6	4	14	2	11	6	28
Inadequate Treatment/Therapy	32	47	5	18	7	38	6	28
Poor Coordination of Treatment	3	4	7	25	2	11	2	9
Patient's Safety not Maintained	9	13	1	3	3	16	2	9

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Chief Executives review and update guidelines and procedures to address complaints in the following 'Quality of Care' areas: 'Inadequate Treatment/Therapy'; 'Inadequate Diagnosis/Observation'; 'Poor Co-ordination of Treatment'; 'Pain Management'. Area Health Service Clinical Governance Units should monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of any policy or procedural changes as part of their clinical audit process.

Access

'Access' refers to the availability of services in terms of location, waiting times and other constraints that limit the delivery of health care services to the community.

In financial year 2003-2004, there was a total of 1012 (23.4%) 'Access' complaint issues. The most common complaint issues related to 'Inadequate or No Service' (n=286, 28.3%), 'Delay in Admission/Treatment' (n=245, 24.2%), 'Waiting List Delay (n=168, 16.6%) and 'Discharge or Transfer Arrangements' (n=142, 14%). Figure 11 provides a breakdown of 'Access' complaint issues recorded in financial year 2003-2004.

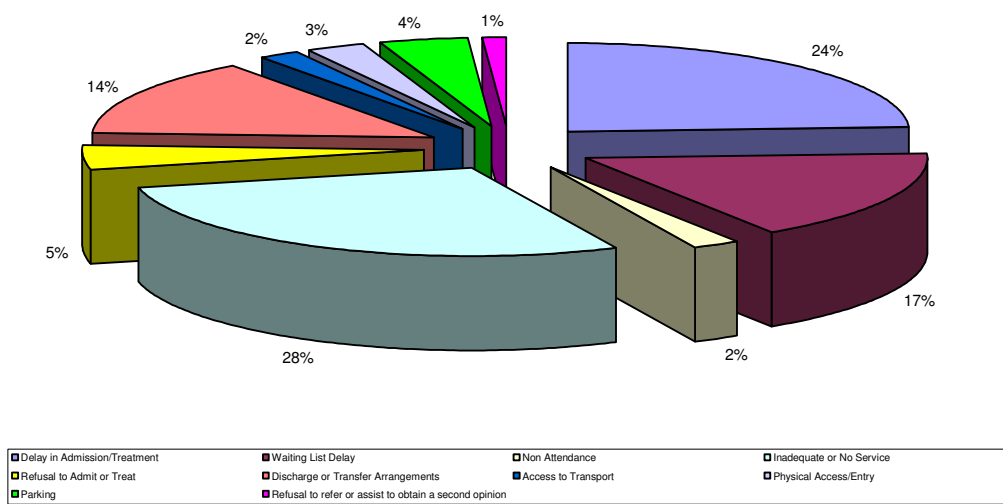


FIGURE 11: Breakdown of 'Access' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

Figure 12 and Figure 13 provide a breakdown of 'Access' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Service.

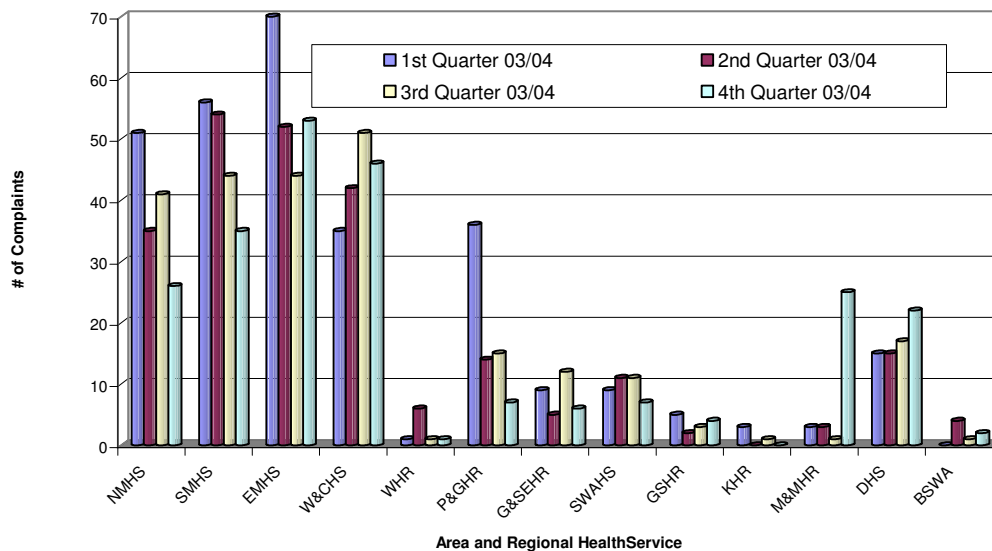


FIGURE 12: Number of 'Access' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

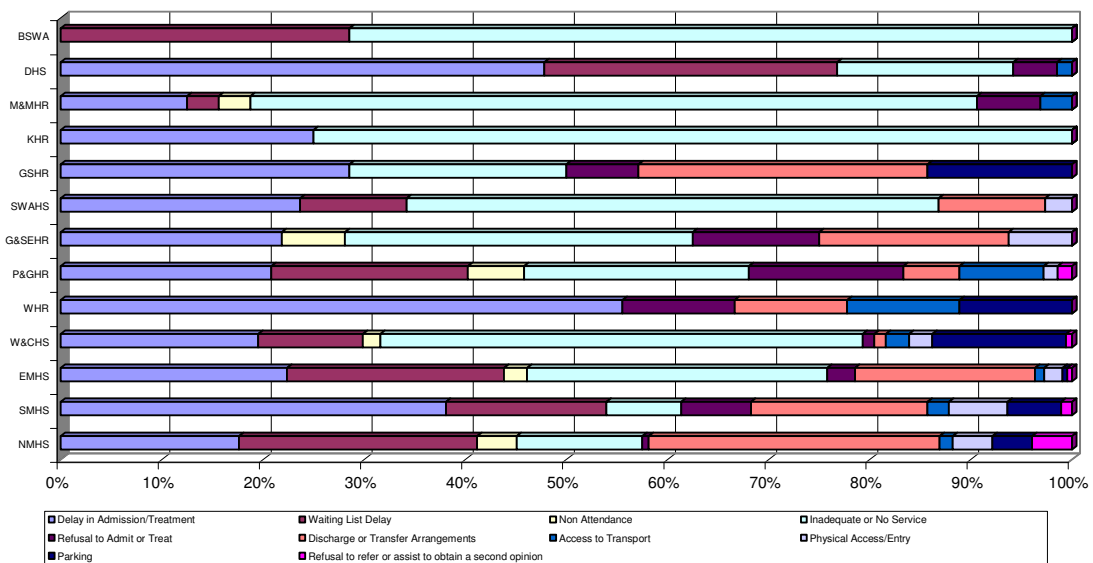


FIGURE 13: Breakdown of 'Access' complaint issues by Area Health Service in 2003-2004.

Metropolitan Area Health Services

Metropolitan Area Health Services received 811 (80%) 'Access' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. This represents an increase of 20% on financial year 2002-2003. 219 (21.6%) 'Access' complaints were received by East Metropolitan Health Service; South Metropolitan Health Service (n=189, 18.6%); Women's and Children's Health Service (n=174, 17.2%) and North Metropolitan Health Service (n=153, 15.1%). The most common 'Access' complaint issues recorded by the above Health Services related to:

Complaint Issue	NMHS		SMHS		EMHS		W&CHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Discharge/Transfer Arrangements	44	28	33	17	39	17	2	1
Delay in Admission/Treatment	27	17	72	38	49	22	34	19
Waiting List Delay	36	23	30	16	47	21	18	10
Inadequate or No Service	19	12	14	7	65	29	83	47

Country Health Service Regions

The WA Country Health Service received 163 (16%) of 'Access' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. Pilbara Gascoyne Health Region (n=72, 7.1%), Goldfields and South East Health Region (n=32, 3.1%) and Midwest and Murchison Health Region (n=32, 3.1%) recorded the highest number of 'Access' complaint issues in the WA Country Health Service. South West Health Service recorded 38 (3.7%) 'Access' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004.

The most common 'Access' complaint issues received by the above Health Service Regions related to:

Complaint Issue	P&GHR		G&SEHR		M&MHR		SWAHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Delay in Admission/Treatment	15	20	7	21	4	12	9	23
Inadequate or No Service	16	22	11	34	23	71	20	52

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Area Health Services review their policies, protocols and communication processes to address complaint issues related to: 'Delay in Admission/Treatment'; 'Wait List Delays'; 'Discharge or Transfer Arrangements'; and 'Inadequate or No Service'. Area Health Service Clinical Governance Units should monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of any policy or procedural changes as part of their clinical audit process.

Rights, Respect and Dignity

'Rights, Respect and Dignity' refers to the patients/client's legislated human and health care rights.

In financial year 2003-2004, there were 820 (18.9%) 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in WA. The most common complaint issues related to 'Inconsiderate Service/Lack of Courtesy' (n=389, 47%), 'Absence of Caring' (n=223, 27%), 'Breach of Confidentiality' (n=70, 8.5%) and 'Failure to Ensure Privacy' (n=66, 8%). Figure 14 provides a breakdown of 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues recorded in financial year 2003-2004.

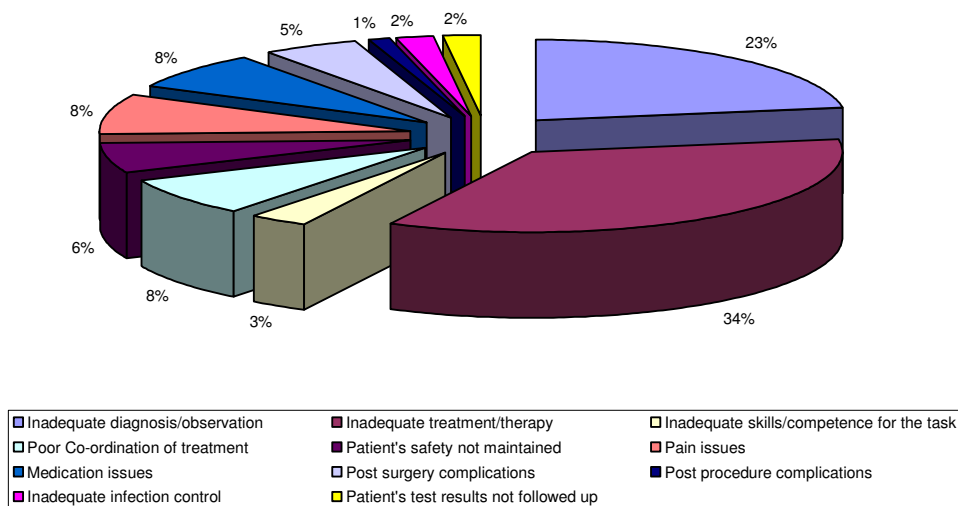


FIGURE 14: Breakdown of 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues recorded in 2003-2004

Figure 15 and Figure 16 provide a breakdown of 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in financial year 2003-2004.

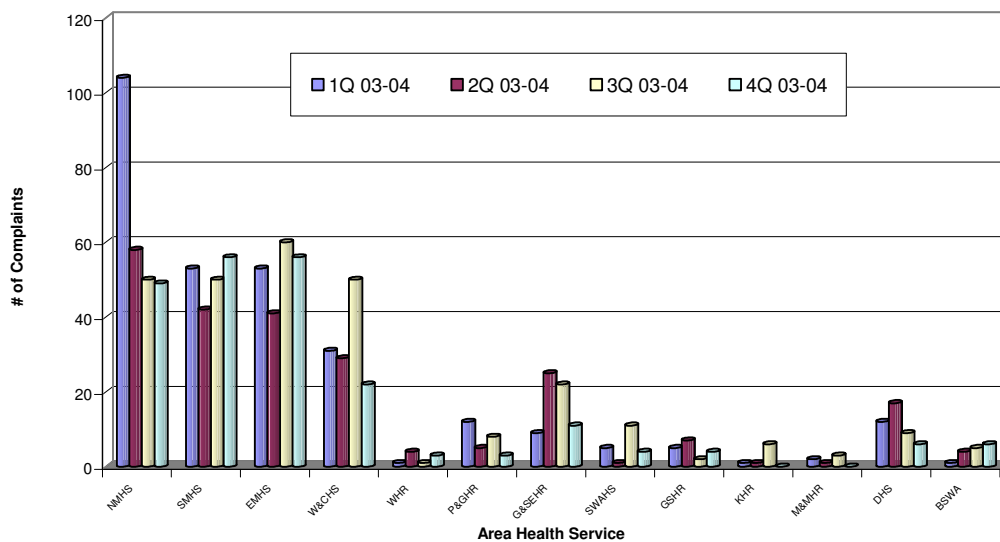


FIGURE 15: Number of 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

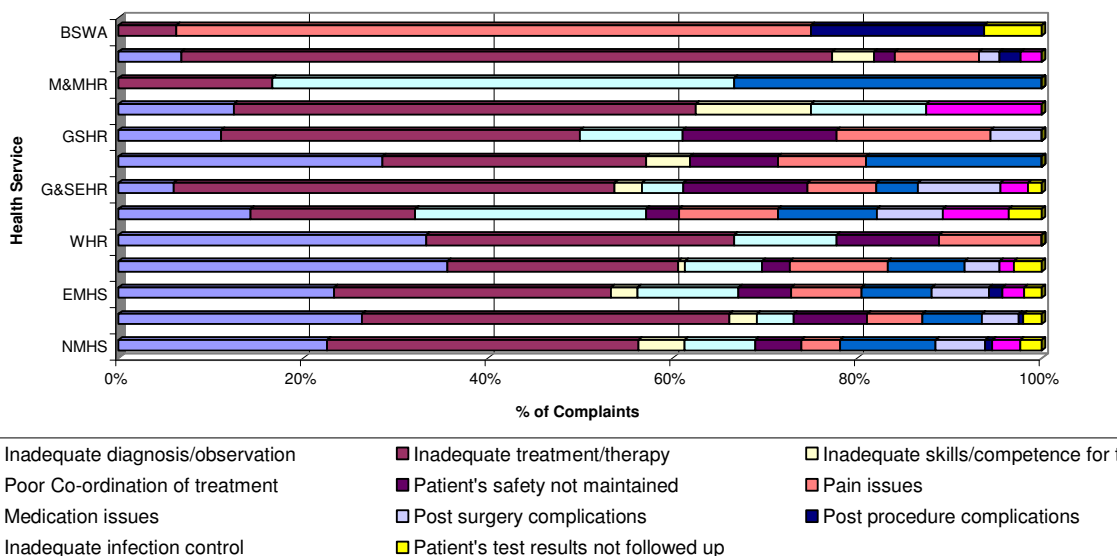


FIGURE 16: Breakdown of 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues by Area Health Services in 2003-2004.

Metropolitan Area Health Services

Metropolitan Area Health Services received 697 (84.8%) of all 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues recorded in 2003-2004. East Metropolitan Health Service recorded 277 (33.8%) the highest number of 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues, followed by South Metropolitan Health Service (n= 162, 19.7%), North Metropolitan Health Service (n=121, 14.7%) and Women's and Children's Health Service (n=117, 14.3%). The most common 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues recorded by the above Area Health Services related to:

Complaint Issue	NMHS		SMHS		EMHS		W&CHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inconsiderate Service/Lack of Courtesy	61	50.4	66	40.7	143	51.6	53	45.3
Breach of Confidentiality'	12	9.9	10	6.1	18	6.4	7	5.9
Absence of Caring	35	28.9	37	22.8	82	29.6	41	35
Failure to Ensure Privacy	3	2.4	27	16.6	17	6.1	9	7.6

Country Health Service Regions

The three WA Country Health Service Regions with the highest 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues in 2003-2004 were: Pilbara Gascoyne Health Region (n= 31, 3.7%), Goldfields and South East Health Region (n=28, 3.4%) and Midwest and Murchison Health Region (n=17, 2%). South West Health Area Service recorded 33 (4%) 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues in 2003-2004. The most common 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' complaint issues related to:

Complaint Issue	P&GHR		G&SEHR		M&MHR		SWAHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inconsiderate Service/Lack of Courtesy	14	45.2	12	42.8	4	23.5	17	51.5
Breach of Confidentiality'	6	19.4	3	10.7	5	29.4	2	6
Absence of Caring	4	12.9	5	17.8	5	29.4	10	30.3

Recommendations:

A patient's/client's right 'to be treated with respect and dignity' is enshrined in the WA Medicare Public Patients' Hospital Charter and the WA Public Service Code of Conduct. The survey results highlight considerable concern regarding the courtesy and conduct of health care professionals across the health system. Compliance with the Code of Conduct should be monitored and enforced by Heads of Departments and Area Health Service Executive Teams.

Communication

Communication relates to the quality, quantity, appropriateness and delivery of information provided about services, diagnostic tests and treatment. 'Communication' issues (n=723) accounted for 16.7% of all complaints in financial year 2003-2004. The most common 'Communication' complaint issues related to 'Misinformation or Failure in Communication' (n=199, 27.5%), 'Inappropriate Verbal/Non Verbal Communication' (n=172, 23.8%), 'Failure to Listen to Patient/Carer/Family' (n=113 (15.6%) and 'Inadequate Communication' (n=96, 13.3%). Figure 17 provides a breakdown of 'Communication' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in 2003-2004.

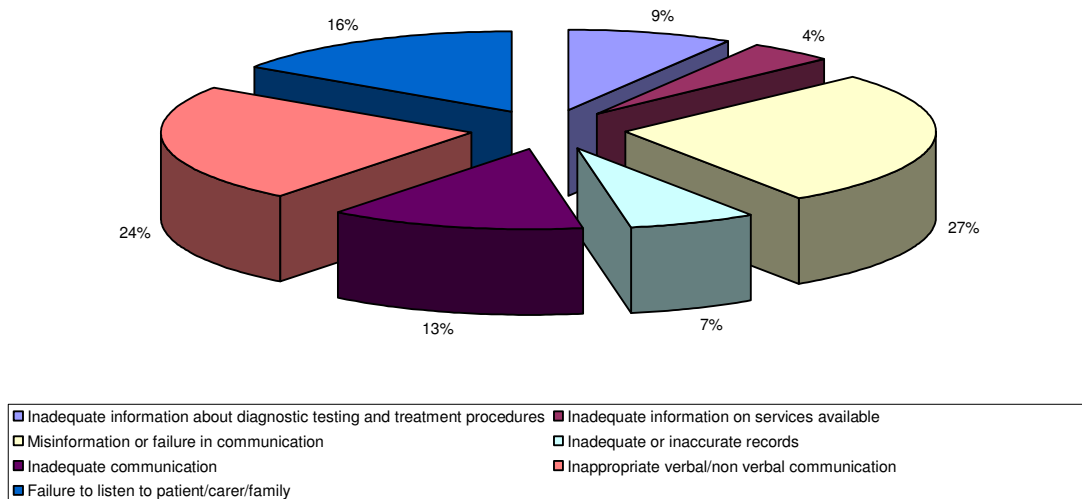


FIGURE 17: Breakdown of 'Communication' complaint issues in 2003-2004

Figure 18 and Figure 19 provide a breakdown of 'Communication' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in financial year 2003-2004.

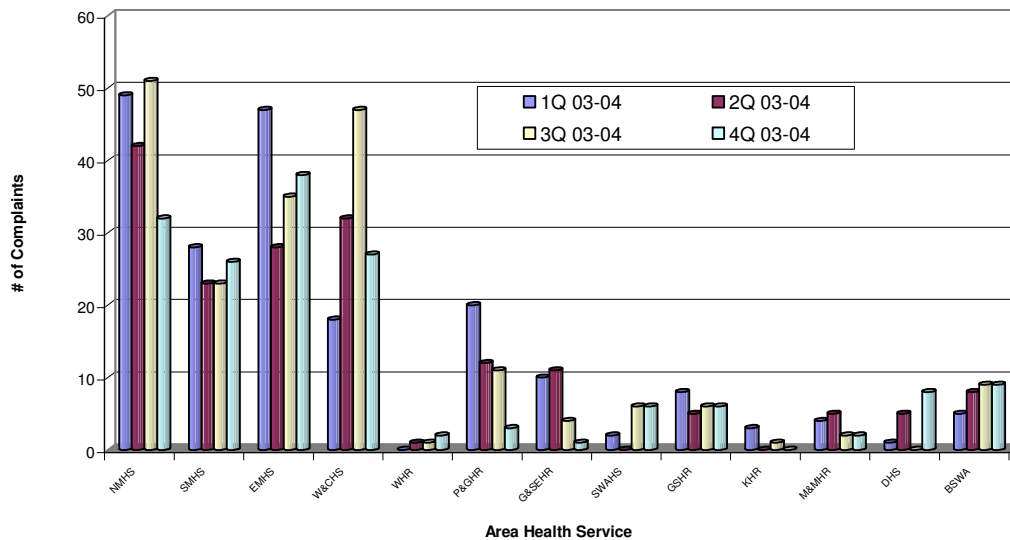


FIGURE 18: Number of 'Communication' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

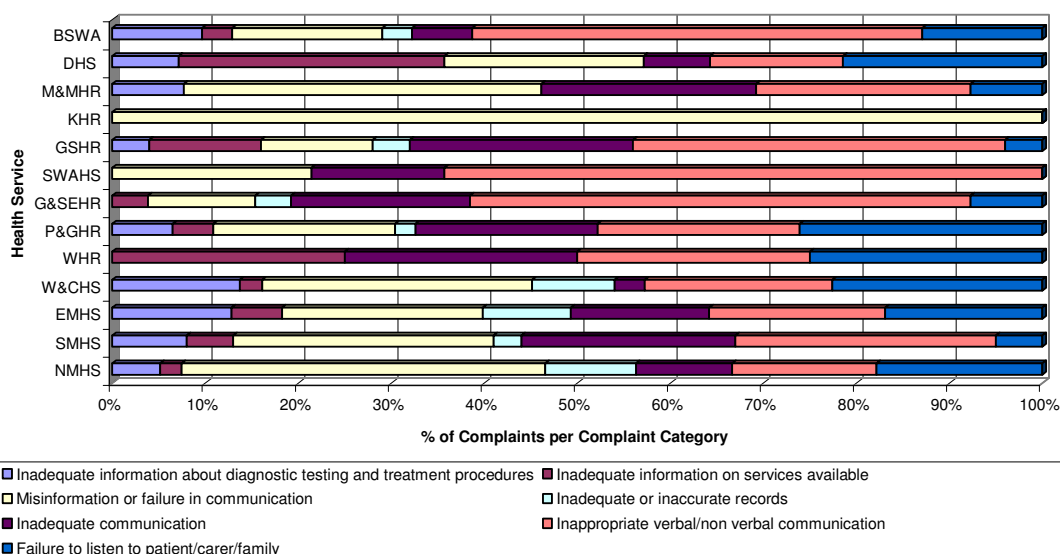


FIGURE 19: Breakdown of 'Communication' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004.

Metropolitan Area Health Services

Metropolitan Area Health Services recorded 590 (81.8%) 'Communication' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. This represents an increase of 18% on financial year 2003-2004. The highest number of 'Communication' complaint issues were recorded by North Metropolitan Health Service (n=174, 24%), East Metropolitan Health Service (n=148, 20.5%), Women's and Children's Health Service (n=124, 17.1%), South Metropolitan Health Service (n=100, 13.8%) and Breast Screen WA (n= 31, 4.2%). Most complaints related to:

Complaint Issue	NMHS		SMHS		EMHS		W&CHS		BSWA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Misinformation or Failure in Communication	68	39	28	28	32	21.6	36	29	5	16
Inadequate Communication	18	10.3	23	23	22	14.8	4	3.2	2	6.4
Inappropriate Verbal/Non Verbal Communication	27	21.3	28	28	28	18.9	25	20.2	15	48
Failure to Listen to Patient/Carer/Family	31	17.8	5	5	25	16.9	28	22.6	4	12.9

Analysis has revealed that 23(45%) of the recorded complaints in this category for PARK was a direct result of facility redevelopment. This issue has now been resolved.

Country Health Service Regions

The WA Country Health Service recorded 132 (18.2%) 'Communication' complaint issues in financial year 2003-2004. The highest number of 'Communication' complaint issues were recorded by Pilbara Gascoyne Health Region (n=46, 6.3%), Goldfields and South East Health Region (n=26, 3.6%) and Great Southern Health Region (n=25, 3.4%). South West Area Health Service recorded 14 (1.9%) 'Communication' complaint issues. Most 'Communication' complaint issues related to:

Complaint Issue	P&GHR		G&SEHR		GSHR		SWAHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Misinformation or Failure in Communication	9	19.6	3	11.5	3	12	3	21.4
Inadequate Communication	9	19.6	5	19	6	24	2	14.3
Inappropriate Verbal/Non Verbal Communication	10	21.7	14	53	10	40	9	64
Failure to Listen to Patient/Carer/Family	12	26	2	7	1	4	0	0

Recommendations:

Area Health Services should provide appropriate human factors and communication training programs to staff, as part of their orientation and professional development programs, to improve staff interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills.

Corporate Services

'Corporate Services' provided the fifth highest number of complaint issues in 2003-2004 (n=420, 9.7%). The most common 'Corporate Service' complaint issues related to 'Facilities' (n=185, 44%), 'Administrative Practice' (n=132, 31.4%) and 'Catering' (n=48, 11.4%). Figure 20 provides a breakdown of 'Corporate Service' complaint issues recorded in financial year 2003-2004.

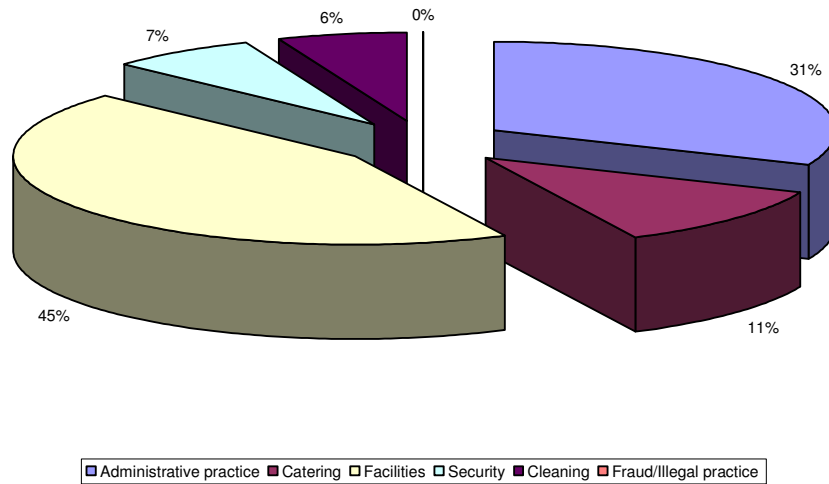


FIGURE 20: Breakdown of 'Corporate Services' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

Figure 21 and Figure 22 provide a breakdown of 'Corporate Service' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in financial year 2003-2004. The Increase in complaints in South Metropolitan Health Service was attributable to an increased number of complaint issues at Peel & Rockingham Kwinana Health Service recorded in the 4th quarter of 2003-2004. 92% of these complaint issues related to communication issues arising from the installation of windows in the Triage Reception area at Rockingham District Hospital. Focus group meetings with key stakeholders has resulted in the reconstruction of the area with a new design. The issue is now resolved, with complaints in this area reduced to 6 in the first half of 2004/2005.

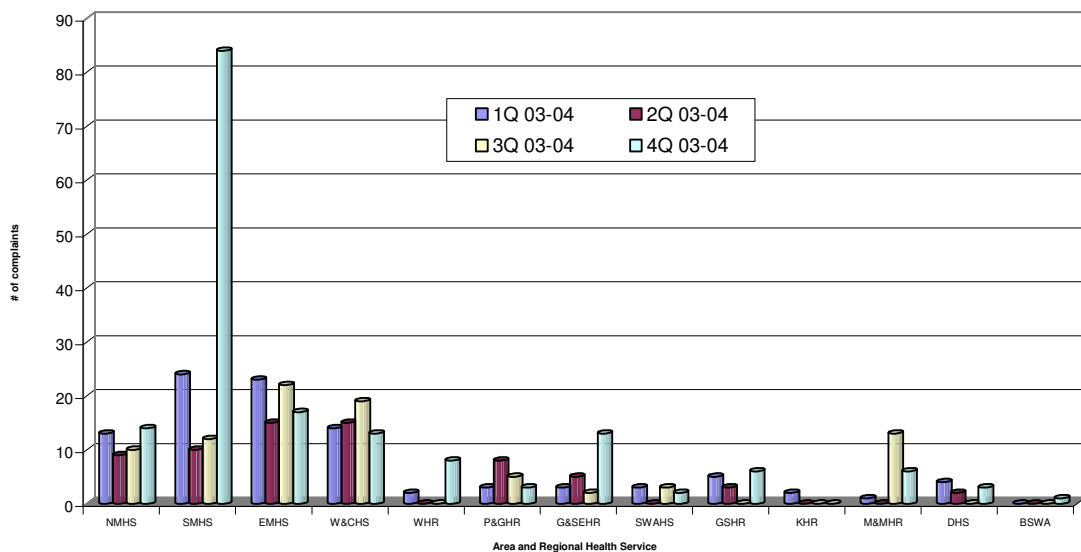


FIGURE 21: Number of 'Corporate Services' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

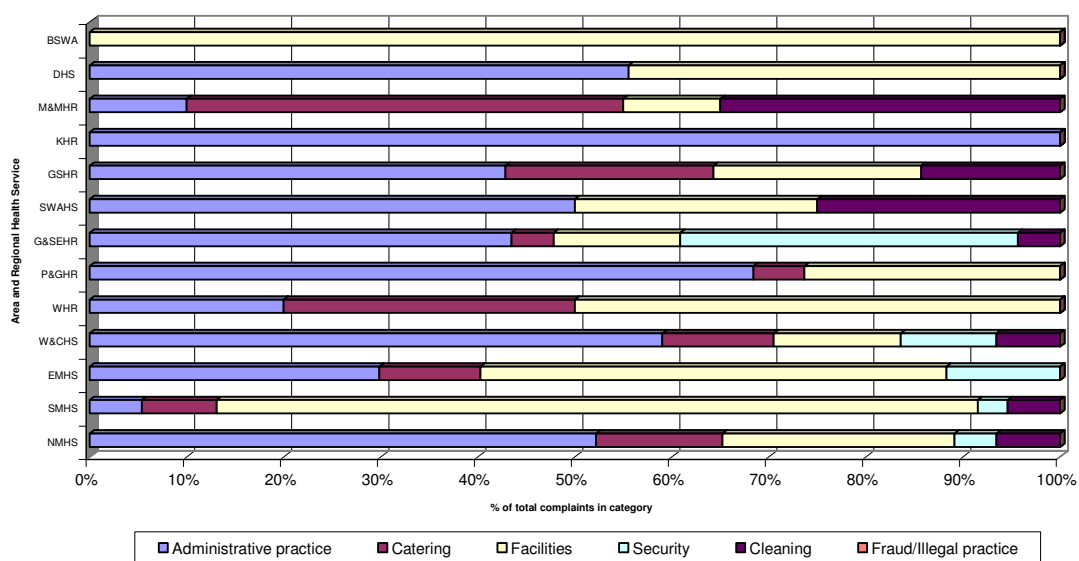


FIGURE 22: Breakdown of 'Corporate Services' complaint issues reported to Area Health Services in 2003-2004.

Metropolitan Area Health Services

Metropolitan Area Health Services recorded 321 (77.2%) of 'Corporate Service' complaint issues in 2003-2004. The highest 'Corporate Services' complaint issues were recorded at South Metropolitan Health Service (n=130, 30.9%), East Metropolitan Health Service (n=77, 18.3%) and Women's and Children's Health Service (n=61, 14.5%). Most complaints related to:

Complaint Issue	NMHS		SMHS		EMHS		W&CHS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Administrative Practice	24	52	7	5.3	23	29.9	36	59
Catering	6	13	10	7.6	8	10.4	7	11.4
Facilities	11	24	102	78.4	37	48	8	13.1

Country Health Services

Country Health Services recorded 96 (22.8%) of 'Corporate Service' complaint issues in 2003-2004. The highest 'Corporate Services' complaint issues were recorded at Goldfields and South East Health Region (n=23, 5.4%), Midwest and Murchison Health Region (n=20, 4.7%), Pilbara and Gascoyne Health Region (n=19, 4.5%) and Great Southern Health Region recorded 14 (3.3%) 'Corporate Services' complaint issues. South West Area Health Service recorded 8 (1.9%) 'Corporate Service' complaint issues. Most complaints related to:

Complaint Issue	P&GHR		G&SEHR		M&MHR		GSHR	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Administrative Practice	13	68.4	10	43.4	2	10	6	42.8
Catering	1	5.2	1	4.3	9	45	3	21.4
Facilities	5	26.3	3	12.5	2	10	3	21.4

Costs

In financial year 2003-2004 there were a total of 151 (3.4%) 'Cost' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in WA. The highest number of 'Cost' complaint issues were recorded by East Metropolitan Health Service (n=38, 25%), South Metropolitan Health Service (n=34, 22.5%) and North Metropolitan Health Service (n=33, 21.8%). Dental Health service recorded 20 (13.2%) 'Cost' complaint issues. Figure 23 provides a breakdown of 'Costs' complaint issues recorded by Health Services in 2003-2004.

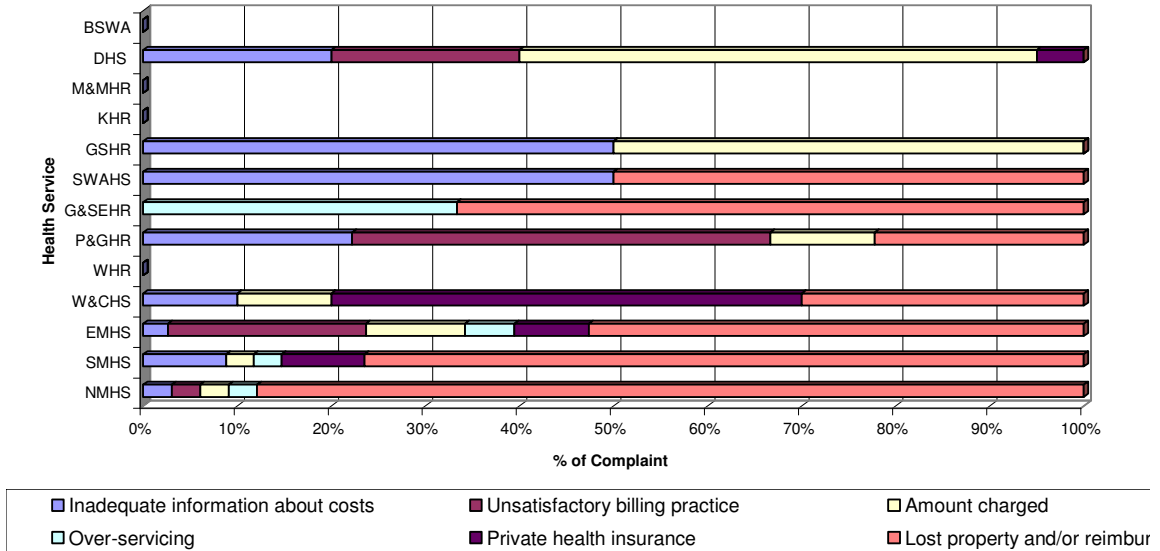


FIGURE 23: Breakdown of 'Costs' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

Professional Conduct

In financial year 2003-2004 there were a total of 96 (2.2%) 'Professional Conduct' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in WA. The highest number of 'Professional Conduct' complaint issues were recorded by North Metropolitan Health Service (n=26, 27%), East Metropolitan Health Service (n=14, 14.6%), South Metropolitan Health Service (n=12, 12.5%). Goldfields and South East Health Region recorded 10 (10.4%) 'Professional Conduct' complaint issues. Figure 24 provides a breakdown of 'Professional Conduct' complaint issues by Health Service in 2003-2004.

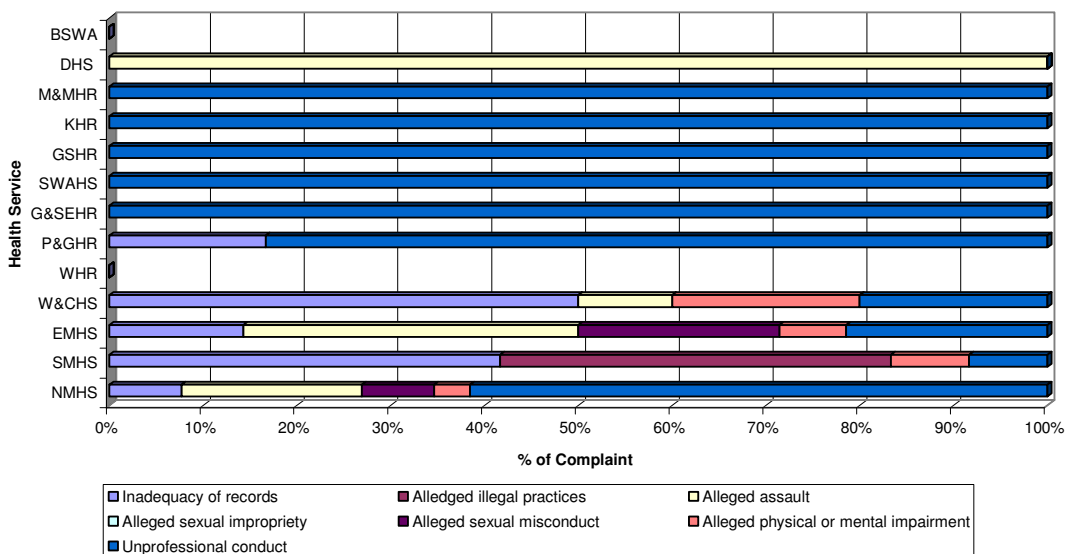


FIGURE 24: Breakdown of 'Professional Conduct' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Service in 2003-2004

Decision Making

In financial year 2003-2004 there was a total of 64 (1.7%) 'Decision Making' complaint issues received by Area Health Services in WA. The largest number of 'Decision Making' complaint issues were recorded by Women's and Children's Health Service (n=19, 29.6%) and North Metropolitan Health Service (n=16, 25%). Figure 25 shows the number of 'Decision Making' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004.

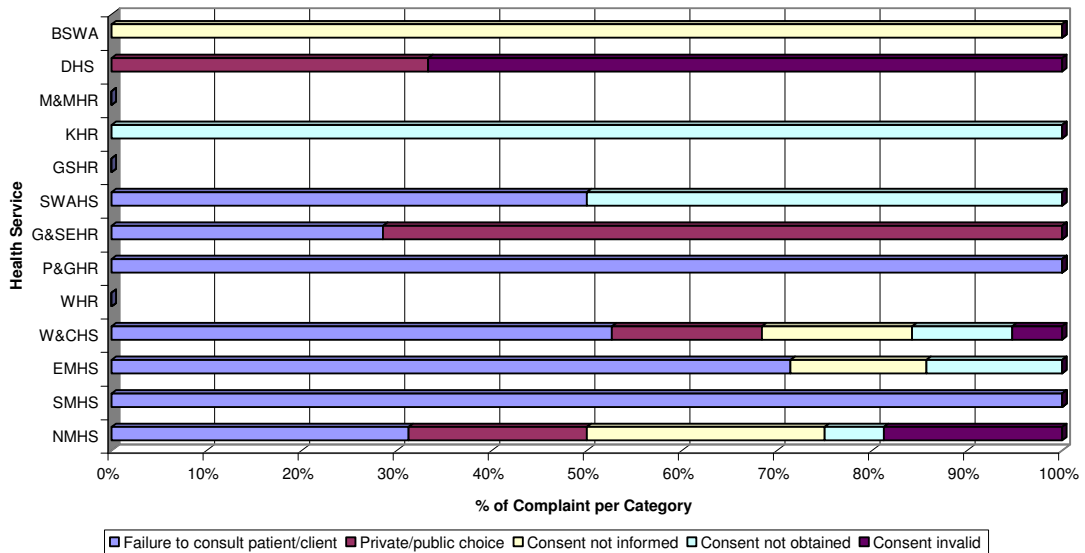


FIGURE 25: Breakdown of 'Decision Making' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

Grievances

Figure 26 shows the number of 'Grievance' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004. In the 'Grievance' (n=22, 0.5%) category, the most highest number of complaints was received by South Metropolitan Health Service (n=10, 45.5%).

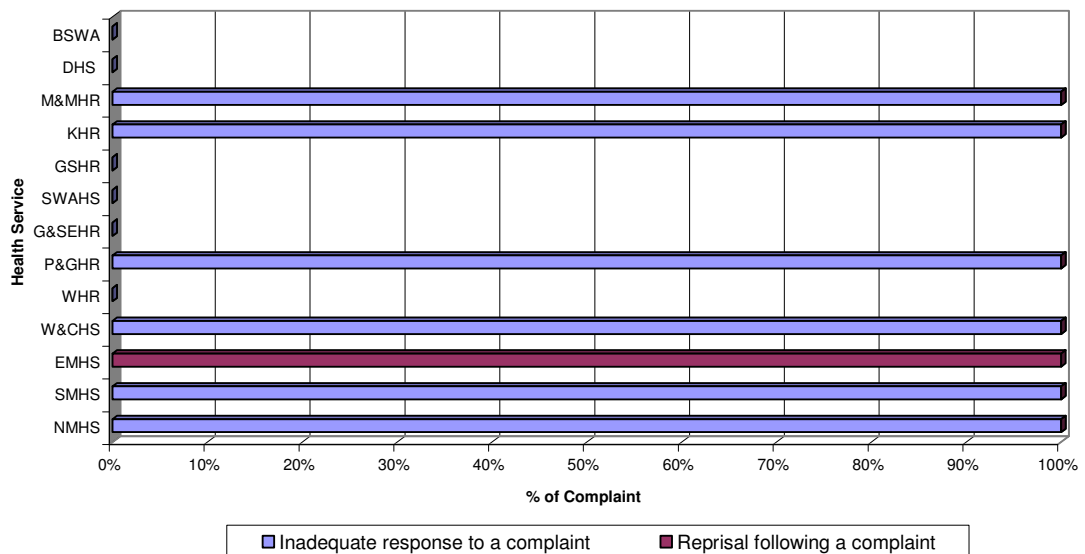


FIGURE 26: Breakdown of 'Grievance' complaint issues recorded by Area Health Services in 2003-2004

Resolution of Complaints

A timely response to consumers' complaint issues is essential to success of any complaint management system. The Western Australian Complaint Management Policy (2003) requires hospitals and health services in WA to report on the timeliness of their complaints resolution processes.

The response times stipulated by the Western Australian Complaint Management Policy (2003) are: 'Less than 15 Working Days', 'Within 30 Working Days', 'Greater than 30 Working Days', 'Still Active' and 'Referred to Another Agency for Resolution'. 1680 (53.6%) complaint issues were resolved in 'Less than 15 Working Days', 770 (24.5%) complaint issues were resolved 'Within 30 Working Days' and 231 (7.4%) of complaint issues were resolved 'Greater than 30 Working Days'. 397 (12.6%) complaint issues were 'Still Active' at the end of 30 June 2004 and only 58 (1.9%) complaint issues needed to be referred to another agency such as the Office of Health Review) for resolution. Figure 27 shows the proportion of complaint issues resolved within each designated response time.

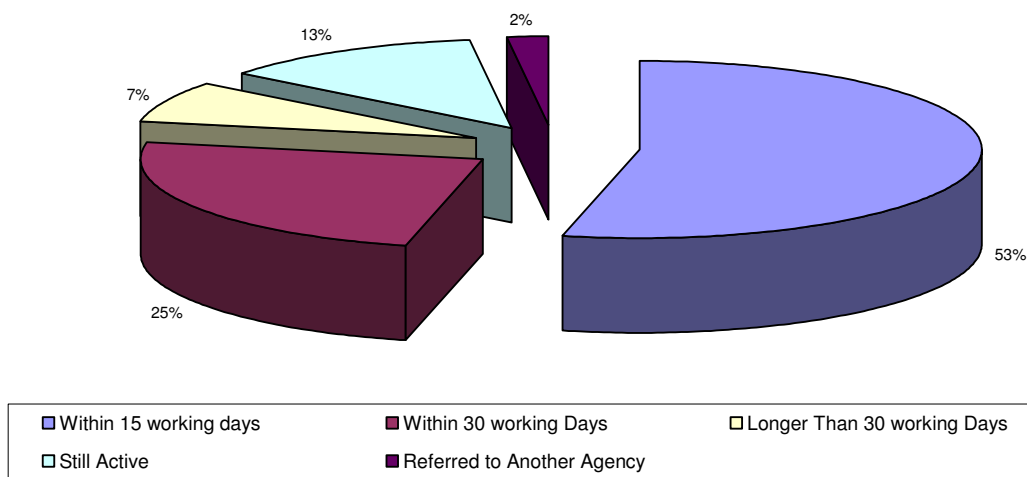


FIGURE 27: Total time taken by Area Health Services to resolve complaint issues in 2003-2004

Figure 28 shows the proportion of complaint issues resolved by each Area Health Service within the designated response times between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004

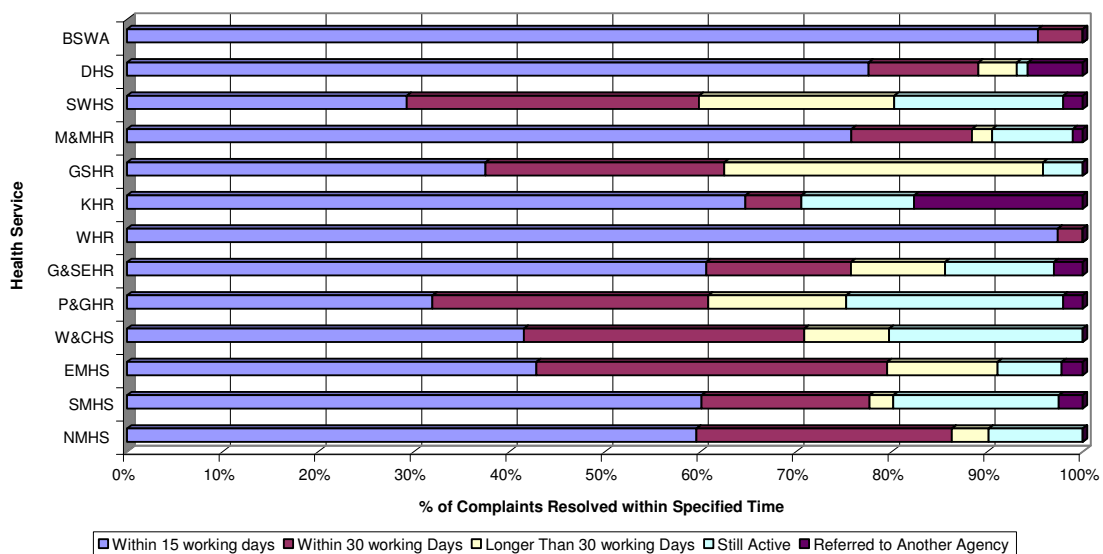


FIGURE 28: Breakdown of time taken by Area Health Services to resolve complaint issues in 2003-2004

Conclusions

In financial year 2003-2004, the total number of complaint issues received by Health Services in WA was **4,330**. The top three complaint categories that contributed the highest number of complaint issues were 'Quality of Care' (n=1021, 23.6%); 'Access' (n=1012, 23.4%); and 'Rights, Respect and Dignity' (n=820, 18.9%).

Analysis of complaint issues highlighted the following areas of concern for the WA health system: delay in admission and treatment, inadequate or no service, inadequate treatment or therapy, inconsiderate service or lack of courtesy, misinformation and failure to communicate with patients/clients, and poor facilities and administrative practice. It is recommended that Area Health Services review the report and its recommendations and provide reports to Area Clinical Governance Units and the Department of Health on actions taken to address issues raised.

The Department of Health has established a Clinical Governance Implementation Project to implement the clinical governance recommendations of the Health Reform Committee (2004). This includes reviewing and updating the WA Clinical Governance Framework to ensure that it is more robust and promotes increased accountability for patient safety and quality at all levels of the organisation.

As part of the Clinical Governance Implementation Project, Area Health Services will be required to ensure that:

- ◆ organisational responsibility for complaint management is clearly defined and there are clear lines of individual, clinical unit and system accountability for complaint management throughout the organisation including the Area Chief Executive and Health Service Executive Team;
- ◆ complaint management policy and strategy has been incorporated into the organisation's clinical governance structures, which support the organisation's accountability arrangements;
- ◆ appropriate key performance indicators are developed and used at all levels of the organisation to measure and demonstrate the effectiveness of the organisation's complaint management system; and
- ◆ systems and processes are in place to monitor and report action taken to achieve improvements in service delivery.

More work will be done, in consultation with budget holders, on further developing clinical safety and quality initiatives and performance indicators during 2004/2005. However, Area Health Services will be required to report on progress towards establishing effective complaint management systems and processes as part of their regular Clinical Governance reporting to the Department of Health, which will commence in 2004/2005.