

# Understanding Hospital Systems

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There are many differences between the Australian hospital system and hospitals overseas.

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The option to see a doctor of choice regardless of whether he/she is a GP or a specialist, as well as choice of clinics, may not have the restrictions overseas that are placed by health services in Australia. Some new arrivals may feel frustrated when told they need a referral from a GP in order to see a specialist. The lack of choice of gender of the practitioner in the public hospitals may also be a problem. People from some poor countries (where services may be especially limited), particularly older people, are afraid that being admitted to hospital will cause their death. They may need some information about the differences between the health systems here and in their country.

There are many questions that need to be answered for patients who are first exposed to the public hospital systems. The

Medicare system may have to be explained because the cost of health care is a major barrier to utilization of services. Those who are paying for their treatment because they do not qualify for Medicare rebates need to be fully informed of all costs involved.

Other issues include:

- ⊙ When friends and family can visit.
- ⊙ Discharge procedures.
- ⊙ The processes within the hospital.
- ⊙ How the pharmacy works.
- ⊙ Why medical and personal history have to be repeated more than once to different people in the hospital.
- ⊙ Who the different people who interview them in hospital are.