

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Flemish hospitals must improve their communication**

*Brandhome performs study into perceived quality of hospital care*

**Belgian health care – especially hospital care – has a strong reputation. But.. 'Do patients and visitors confirm that? And which factors influence satisfaction with a hospital? Brandhome wanted to know more, so it carried out a large-scale study with both online and qualitative elements among patients and visitors at Flemish hospitals. One of the unexpected conclusions was that communication quality was the most important factor in choosing a hospital. And the respondents were quick to state that a great deal could be done to improve that communication. Communication about the costs of care scored particularly badly.**

#### **General results of the study**

##### *1. Communication is important but must be improved*

90% of Flemish people say that clear and open communication by physicians and nursing staff is extremely important when choosing a hospital. That makes communication the most important single selection criterion. Other requirements that a hospital has to meet include being modern (84%) and taking account of personal wishes and needs (82%).

It is striking how few patients and visitors are satisfied with the communication. *Organisational communication*, including communication about care costs, received an especially low rating, with 75% of respondents believing that this could be improved.

##### *2. Appreciation of staff*

Patients and visitors are very satisfied with the friendliness of the nursing staff (62%), the attending physician (59%), the reception staff (55%) and the people who answer the phones (54%).

##### *3. There are clear wishes and requirements*

The respondents have a clear opinion on what could be improved at a hospital. For the most part, it has to do with facilities, the most frequently cited examples being wireless internet (52%), comfortable chairs in the rooms (48%), brighter colours (45%) and better parking (44%).

### **Brandhome's conclusion**

Hospitals have traditionally limited their communication to their core business: medical care. And this communication consisted primarily of information conveyed between the doctor and the patient/family. Greater attention has been given more recently to organisational communication: i.e. communication about charges, routing, facilities, etc. As the study showed, however, there is a great deal of room for improvement here. The expectations of patients and visitors are rising and are also shifting beyond good medical care alone. People are more demanding about how they are approached, the hospital's facilities and their quality. All this represents a major opportunity for hospitals to differentiate themselves in a positive way from one another.

In brand terms, they definitely should differentiate themselves more clearly in this way. Hospitals will have to adopt more commercial approaches in order to communicate to market their strengths more effectively. This isn't happening yet, but it is essential if satisfaction is to be increased and patients and visitors are to be given a sense of getting 'value for their money'.

### **Details of the study**

An online survey was performed among 1,000 Flemish people, in addition to which 497 patients and visitors to Flemish hospitals took part in a qualitative study. The research was performed in June and July this year.

Brandhome is a communication agency that works according to a unique and effective brand-building methodology, the Brandhome method<sup>®</sup>. The agency's key goals include constantly increasing brand knowledge. Brandhome is headquartered in Antwerp, Belgium.

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*Note for editors, not for publication:*

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