

Patient voices: experiences of healthcare access in Asia

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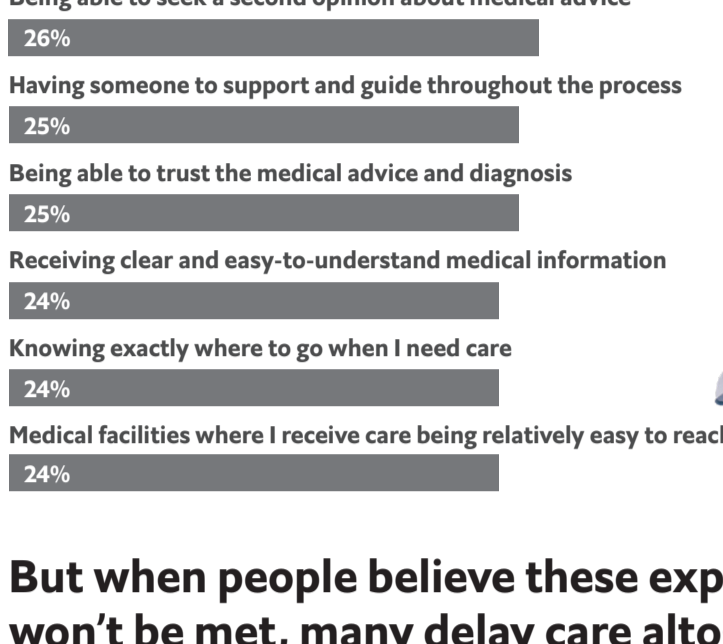
Asia's healthcare is advancing fast. More people are living longer and services are expanding. But ageing populations and chronic diseases are stretching systems thin. For many patients, care is still hard to reach, costly to manage and complex to move through.

This infographic shares the experiences of 4,203 people in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore who accessed healthcare in the past year. It is a snapshot of rising patient expectations across the region. Patients value clarity, affordability and care that fits their lives—without disrupting their routines. Their experiences point to clear opportunities for more accessible, responsive systems.

Before care begins

What people want overall

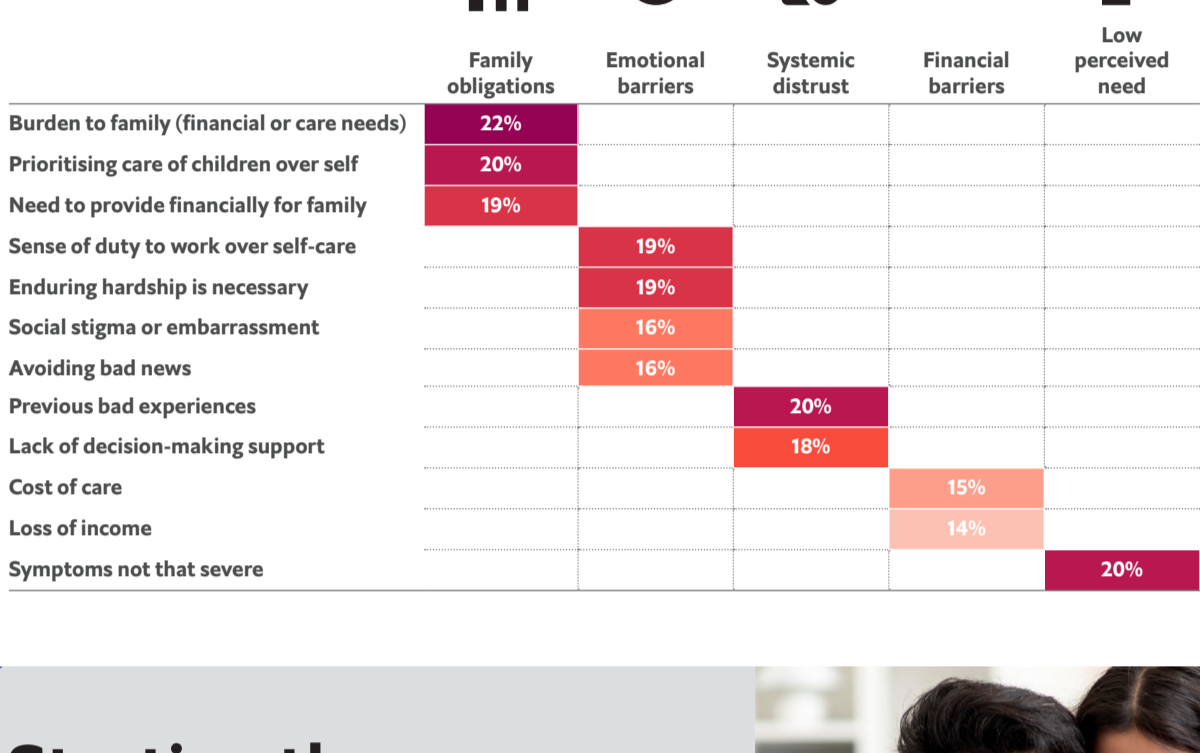
Factors that offer the greatest sense of support, confidence and peace of mind when seeking medical care



But when people believe these expectations won't be met, many delay care altogether.



Often, for reasons linked to family obligations, work responsibilities, emotional factors or cost-related concerns.



Starting the care journey

Patients are confused about where to enter the system.

55% say they don't know where to access care when they have a health concern



“When symptoms emerge people are often unsure if they should go to the GP or a hospital and whether they should go public or private.”

Nidhi Swarup
founding chairperson, Alliance of Patients' Organisations Singapore

Even when they know, accessing care is inconvenient and slow:

58% describe GP access as inconvenient due to difficulties in booking an appointment, long wait times or other accessibility issues

20% report that health facilities are hard to reach by available transport (second most cited challenge)

On the care pathway

After accessing the system, patients face:

System confusion: needing guidance

Forms, claims and insurance paperwork make the experience of healthcare frustrating. People seek guidance through the complex system.

19% cite confusing bureaucracies as one of the key challenges when accessing care accessibility issues

25% cite a need for guidance during the care-seeking process



Information gap: looking for answers

Patients want timely, understandable information to guide decisions.

55% say they lack the right information to make treatment decisions

54% say they are discouraged from seeking second opinions

When care lacks clarity, where do people turn?

After initial diagnosis, who or what guides care decisions

38% rely on digital sources:
- Online health forums or websites
- Internet searches
- Social media
- AI platforms or
- Health apps

33% rely on clinical guidance:
- GPs
- Specialists or
- Pharmacists

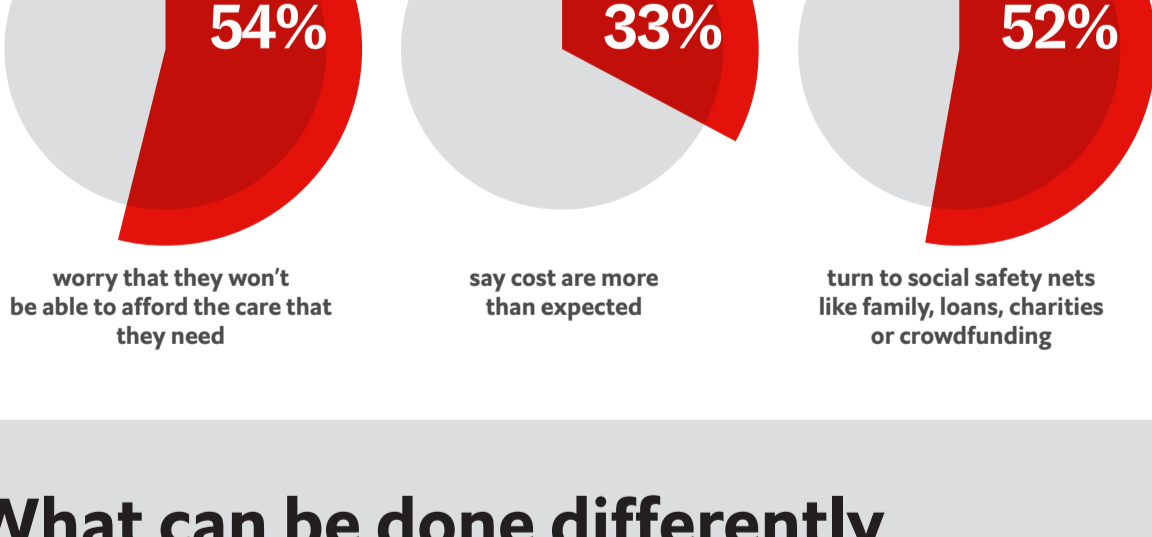
While the beat about the role that technology is playing, the experts we interviewed also counsel caution.

“We must educate our young people in particular about how to understand the information they're finding digitally and on how to act on it.”

Victor Hoe
professor of occupational and public health, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia

Cost shock: seeking financial security

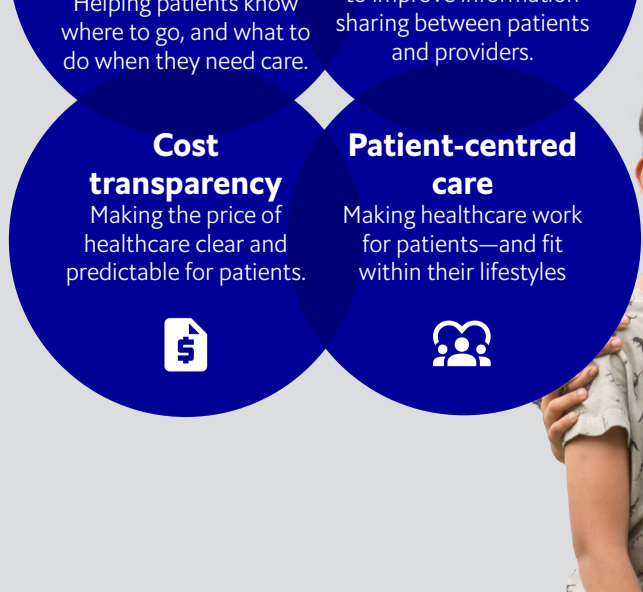
People want not just affordability but no cost surprises. Our survey reveals:



What can be done differently to improve patient experiences

Alleviating delay, confusion, cost shocks and information gaps.

These are not just inconveniences, they are barriers to health. For policymakers, payers (including health insurers) and providers, tackling these pain points is essential to create more resilient, patient-centred systems that meet the rising expectations of Asia's growing and ageing populations.



Patient voices: experiences of healthcare access in Asia is an Economist Impact report, supported by Prudential. The report examines healthcare experiences of over 4,000 patients across four dynamic health markets: Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Our analysis uncovers the key pain points patients face in accessing, affording, and moving through healthcare. Find out more at: <https://impact.economist.com/health/patient-voices-asia#report>

