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## Visiting Hours Survey: Explosive Development at Danish Hospitals

This is an English resume. [The survey has been published in a report in Danish.](#)

About The Danish Society for Patient Safety: <https://patientsikkerhed.dk/english/>

A new survey shows a doubling of the average number of visiting hours at Danish hospitals, going from 12 hours in 2013 to 23 hours in the present survey.

During the same period, the proportion offering free visiting hours has increased more than nine-fold, from 9% in 2013 to 84% in 2018.

The 2018 version of the visiting hours survey was carried out in early March, by The Danish Society for Patient Safety. We registered visiting hours at 120 of the country's medical and surgical wards, with a reasonable spread across the five hospital regions of Denmark.

The survey is based exclusively on information from the home pages of wards and is a repetition of corresponding studies in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

There are still a few wards with only a small number of visiting hours available; however, in the 2018 survey, it is a single hospital or a few wards that pull down the average of regions.

The shortest visiting hours in the survey are 7 hours (14-21). However, we found a ward which does not form part of the survey, but which is only open from 14.30 to 17 and from 18.30 to 20.30 – i.e. a total of 4½ hours. Furthermore, this ward is a geriatric ward, where you might expect the need for the presence of family members to be substantial.

So, even if we are almost there in terms of having free visiting hours at Danish hospitals, we are not quite there yet.

### Room for improvement

If we are to add a bit of criticism, the home pages reviewed are not, unfortunately, always positive in their rhetoric.

One region: "Good advice to family members: When a person is taken ill, care and visits from family and close friends are important. If the person taken ill wants it, you can play an active role during the person's admission, since you are close to that person".



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One hospital: “Family members are essential, because they spend time with and support the patient in the home and in the patient’s daily life. As a family member, you hear and experience things in a different way than the patient and you often provide support. However, you may also find yourself in a difficult situation, when your nearest have been taken ill and are feeling poorly. You may easily find that you are alone with a big challenge, when a person you may have leaned on in the past cannot do what the person used to be able to do...”

In 2015 and 2016, we carried out analyses of the rhetoric of home page messages about family members, visits and visiting hours; these studies were “Family members welcome” by Christine Isager and “From information to invitation” by Christina Pontoppidan.

The messages from these studies still have current value, since many hospitals and wards could get much better at reaching out to family members, inviting them actively and sending the signal that you worry about them too. However, this does not reduce our enthusiasm about developments in recent years.

### **Amazing development**

The six visiting hours studies carried out by Hello Healthcare/Danish Society for Patient Safety/Tryg Foundation since 2013 document an amazing development in family member inclusion in Danish hospitals. With an average number of visiting hours of 23 at the wards reviewed, we are now as close to the goal as is practically feasible.

We have no doubt at all that, within a few years, the concept of visiting hours will be gone. Specific visiting hours have no place in a culture focusing on inclusion of patients and their family members.