

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals July to September 2012

Emergency Departments, July to September 2012

More than half a million patients (564,970 patients) attended NSW emergency departments (EDs) from July to September 2012. This is 4% more than the same quarter a year ago.

Almost half of all emergency attendances (45%) were for patients in the potentially serious (triage 4) category; 33% were in the potentially life threatening category (triage 3), 12% in the lowest urgency category (triage 5) and 10% in the imminently life threatening category (triage 2). Patients in the immediately life threatening category (triage 1) accounted for less than 1% of all ED patients.

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Arrivals by ambulance

From July to September 2012 there were 143,908 arrivals by ambulance to NSW public hospital emergency departments. This is a 6% increase since a year ago.

For patients arriving by ambulance, 57% were transferred into the care of ED staff within 30 minutes. This compares with 61% a year ago and 65% two years ago.

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Time to start treatment

At a state level, we report the median times and 95th percentile times by which ED patients start treatment for triage categories 2 to 5.

- The Bureau does not report time to treatment for triage 1 patients (e.g. critical injury, cardiac arrest) as this category is extremely time sensitive, representing a 2 minute window to begin treatment.
- Triage 2 – imminently life threatening (e.g. chest pain, severe burns)
The median time to start treatment was 8 minutes (unchanged) and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 41 minutes (1 minute shorter than same time last year).
- Triage 3 – potentially life threatening (e.g. moderate blood loss, dehydration)
The median time to start treatment was 24 minutes (1 minute shorter) and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 137 minutes (5 minutes shorter than same time last year).
- Triage 4 – potentially serious (e.g. sprained ankle, earache)
The median time to start treatment was 33 minutes (3 minutes shorter) and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 185 minutes (8 minutes shorter than same time last year).
- Triage 5 – less urgent (e.g. small cuts or abrasions)
The median time to start treatment was 30 minutes (4 minutes shorter) and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 174 minutes (24 minutes shorter than same time last year).

The median times to start treatment were the same or shorter compared to the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile times to start treatment were all shorter in each triage category.

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Leaving the emergency department

Hospital Quarterly reports how NSW hospitals are performing against the National Emergency Access Target (NEAT). The annual target for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave emergency departments within four hours. In July to September this year, 58% of patients left NSW EDs within four hours.

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The median time to leaving the ED for all patients was three hours and 26 minutes. This is similar to the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was 14 hours and 17 minutes after presentation. This is longer than the same quarter in 2011.

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The patients who received treatment in the ED and were subsequently transferred to a ward, a critical care unit or an operating suit in the hospital generally spent the longest time in the ED of all ED patients.

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Elective Surgery, July to September 2012

During this quarter, 54,216 elective surgery procedures were completed in NSW public hospitals or in facilities contracted by NSW public hospitals. This is similar to the 54,082 surgical procedures completed in the same quarter in 2011.

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Due to a major upgrade to the information system at The Children's Hospital at Westmead during the July to September 2012 quarter, its data are not considered reliable enough to report. Results from this hospital are excluded from NSW current and previous quarters in this edition of *Hospital Quarterly* to enable comparisons over time. It accounts for approximately 3% of elective surgery activity and its removal does not have a large effect on waiting times for NSW.

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From July to September 2012, 93% of all elective surgery patients were admitted within the recommended time for the urgency of their care. For urgent surgery, 96% of patients were admitted within the recommended 30 days, 92% of semi-urgent patients were admitted within 90 days and 92% of non-urgent patients were admitted within 365 days.

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The median waits for urgent and semi-urgent surgery were stable. The median wait time for non-urgent surgery was 229 days, 13 days more than the same quarter in 2011.

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The 90th percentile wait time for urgent surgery was stable at 28 days. The 90th percentile wait time for semi-urgent surgery was 88 days, two days less than the same quarter in 2011; non-urgent surgery was 363 days, similar to the same quarter in 2011.

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The procedures with the longest median waiting times for this quarter were:

- septoplasty (329 days)
- total knee replacement (286 days)
- myringoplasty/tympanoplasty (278 days)

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The procedures with the shortest median waiting times were:

- other-general (22 days)
- coronary artery bypass graft (28 days)

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The surgical specialities with the highest number of patients receiving elective surgery were:

- general surgery (14,343 patients)
- orthopaedic surgery (8,121 patients)
- gynaecology (7,619 patients)

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The surgical specialities with the lowest number of patients who received elective surgery were “other medical” (497 patients) and cardio-thoracic surgery (896 patients). page 9

Surgical specialities with the highest number of patients waiting longer than 12 months for elective surgery:

- Orthopaedic surgery (170 patients)
- Ear nose and throat surgery (127 patients)

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There were 68,145 patients ready for surgery on the waiting list at the start of the July to September quarter. There were 67,547 patients ready for surgery on the waiting list at the end of the quarter. Of these patients, 3% were in the urgent category, 17% were in the semi-urgent category and 80% were non-urgent. page 11

Admitted Patients, July to September 2012

There were 439,602 admitted patient episodes from July to September 2012. This is 2% more than a year ago. The average length of stay was unchanged at 3.4 bed days.