

MEDIA BACKGROUND

Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals January to March 2013

Admitted Patients, January to March 2013

There were 422,350 admitted patient episodes from January to March 2013. This is 2% more than a year ago. The proportion of admitted patient episodes that were overnight admissions was 55%, the same as one year ago. The average length of stay was 3.2 bed days, 6% less than the same time in 2012.

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Emergency Departments, January to March 2013

More than half a million patients (575,675 patients) attended NSW emergency departments (EDs) from January to March 2013. This is 2% more than the same quarter a year ago.

The proportion of patients admitted to hospital from the ED increased by 5% but was highly variable between hospitals.

see individual profiles for hospitals

Almost half of all emergency attendances (45%) were for patients in the semi-urgent (triage 4) category; 32% were in the urgent category (triage 3), 12% in the non-urgent category (triage 5) and 11% in the emergency category (triage 2). Patients in the resuscitation category (triage 1) accounted for less than 1% of all ED patients.

Note: We have simplified descriptions of the triage categories, in line with those used by other organisations including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the NSW Ministry for Health.

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Arrivals by ambulance

From January to March 2013, there were 138,082 arrivals by ambulance to NSW public hospital emergency departments. This is a 2% increase since a year ago.

Note: The Bureau has not reported ambulance performance measures in this report. It is analysing new data to test possibly better ways for reporting on the time it takes for patients to be transferred from the ambulance into the care of ED staff.

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Time to start treatment

At a state level, we report the times that ED patients start treatment within four triage categories:

- 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 – emergency (e.g. chest pain, severe burns)
The median time to start treatment was 8 minutes (unchanged) and 95% of people started treatment between 0 and 32 minutes (1 minute shorter than same time in 2012) of arrival in the ED.

- Triage 3 – urgent (e.g. moderate blood loss, dehydration)
The median time to start treatment was 21 minutes (1 minute shorter) and 95% of people started treatment between 0 and 109 minutes (5 minutes shorter than same time in 2012).
- Triage 4 – semi-urgent (e.g. sprained ankle, earache)
The median time to start treatment was 28 minutes (3 minutes shorter) and 95% of people started treatment between 0 and 156 minutes (12 minutes shorter than same time in 2012).
- Triage 5 – non-urgent (e.g. small cuts, abrasions)
The median time to start treatment was 27 minutes (4 minutes shorter) and 95% of people started treatment between 0 and 151 minutes (22 minutes shorter than same time in 2012).

Compared to the same time in 2012, the time that it took for half of patients to start treatment was the same or shorter across all triage categories; 95% of patients were seen more quickly in all triage categories. *page 6 figure 5*

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 2013 is for 71% of all patients to leave emergency departments within four hours. In January to March 2013, 65% of patients left NSW EDs within four hours. *page 12*

The median time to leaving the ED for all patients was 3 hours and 4 minutes. This is 10 minutes less than the same quarter in 2012. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was 11 hours exactly after presentation. This is 46 minutes less than the same quarter in 2012. *page 11*

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. *page 10*

Elective Surgery, January to March 2013

During this quarter, 48,013 elective surgery procedures were completed in NSW public hospitals or in facilities contracted by NSW public hospitals. This is 1% less than the 48,497 surgical procedures completed in the same quarter in 2012. *page 1*

From January to March 2013, 95% of all elective surgery patients were admitted within the recommended time for the urgency of their care. For urgent surgery, 99% of patients were admitted within the recommended 30 days, 94% of semi-urgent patients were admitted within 90 days and 94% of non-urgent patients were admitted within 365 days. *page 5*

The median waits for urgent surgery were stable. The median wait time for semi-urgent surgery was 47 days, four days less than the same quarter in 2012. Non-urgent surgery was 230 days, two days less than the same quarter in 2012. *page 6*

The 90th percentile wait time for urgent surgery was 25 days, three days less than the same quarter in 2012. The 90th percentile wait time for semi-urgent surgery was 86 days, seven days

less than the same quarter in 2012; non-urgent surgery was 361 days, four days less than the same quarter in 2012. *page 7*

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

- septoplasty (335 days)
- myringoplasty/tympanoplasty (329 days)
- tonsillectomy (262 days) *page 10*

The procedures with the shortest median waiting times were:

- other - general (23 days)
- coronary artery bypass graft (27 days)
- cystoscopy (30 days) *page 10*

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

- general surgery (12,698 patients)
- orthopaedic surgery (7,330 patients)
- urology (6,285 patients) *page 9*

The surgical specialities with the lowest number of patients who received elective surgery were “medical” (390 patients) and cardio-thoracic surgery (875 patients). *page 9*

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

- ear, nose and throat surgery (295 patients)
- orthopaedic surgery (256 patients) *page 12*