

# At a glance

## Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals

### April to June 2012

The Bureau of Health Information's latest *Hospital Quarterly* report adds to the evolving picture of hospital performance and patient use of hospitals in NSW. In three separate modules, it reports on admitted patients, those who attended emergency departments and those who underwent elective surgery during April to June 2012.

*Hospital Quarterly* looks at the number of elective surgery procedures performed, how long patients waited for their surgery and whether they were treated on time.

This issue also reports on emergency department times to treatment, times to leaving the emergency department and performance against the National Emergency Access Target. This information is profiled over five years so people can identify areas to improve and assess whether any improvements have been sustained.

Detailed information on elective surgery performance for more than 80 hospitals and emergency department care in more than 60 hospitals is available in the Performance Profiles on the Bureau's website [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

During the quarter	Apr-Jun 2012	Apr-Jun 2011	The difference
Admitted patient episodes	426,358 episodes	414,015 episodes	+12,343 (+3%)
Total bed days for acute admitted patient episodes	1,393,433 days	1,370,545 days	+22,888 (+2%)
Elective surgical procedures performed	50,538 procedures	50,434 procedures	unchanged
Elective surgery patients treated on time	92% on time	92% on time	unchanged
Median waiting time for non-urgent surgery	240 days	223 days	+17 (+8%)
Visits to NSW emergency departments	546,032 visits	511,780 visits	+34,252 (+7%)
People travelling to NSW EDs by ambulance	137,090 people	128,011 people	+9,079 (+7%)
Emergency attendances that were categorised as triage 2	54,876 attendances	43,950 attendances	+10,926 (+25%)
Median time to start treatment for triage 2 patients	8 minutes	7 minutes	+1 minute
People leaving the ED within four hours of presentation (NEAT)	58% in 4 hours	58% in 4 hours	unchanged

#### In NSW public hospitals during April to June 2012, on average for each day ...

4,685 people were admitted to hospital

555 people had elective surgery

6,000 people attended an ED

1,669 people were admitted to hospital from an ED

# Elective surgery

## Number of procedures performed

Due to a major upgrade to the information system at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead (CHW) during the April to June 2012 quarter, the data are not considered reliable enough to report. Results from CHW have also been excluded from NSW current and previous quarters to enable comparisons over time. During this quarter, excluding CHW, there were 50,538 elective procedures performed in NSW. This is 8% higher than the last quarter (in line with the usual season pattern), but similar to the same quarter in 2011.

Compared with the same quarter one year ago, less surgery was performed in the urgent category (down 2%), and semi-urgent increased by 5%. The same amount of surgery was performed in the non-urgent category. Staged surgery decreased by 12%.

Urgent procedures made up 24% of all completed elective surgery for this quarter; semi-urgent made up 32%; non-urgent made up 38%; and staged procedures made up 7% of all completed elective surgery.

Elective surgery guidelines	
<b>Category 1</b> Urgent	Admission <b>within 30 days</b> desirable for a condition that has the potential to deteriorate quickly to the point that it may become an emergency
<b>Category 2</b> Semi-urgent	Admission <b>within 90 days</b> desirable for a condition which is not likely to deteriorate quickly or become an emergency
<b>Category 3</b> Non-urgent	Admission <b>within 365 days</b> acceptable for a condition which is unlikely to deteriorate quickly and which has little potential to become an emergency

## On-time admissions

Most patients continued to receive their elective surgery on time during the quarter, with 92% of patients admitted to hospital within the time frame recommended by their surgeon. This is similar to the previous quarter (90%) and the same quarter in 2011 (92%).

Performance across urgency categories remained high, with 94% of patients in the urgent category; 91% of those considered semi-urgent and 91% of patients in the non-urgent category being admitted on time (Figure 1).

## Surgery waiting times

During the April to June 2012 quarter, median waiting times were 11 days for urgent surgery, 49 days for semi-urgent surgery and 240 days for non-urgent surgery (Figure 2).

There was an increase in the median number of days non-urgent surgery patients waited (240 days) compared with the same quarter last year (223 days) and compared to the same quarter in 2010 (236 days). Wait times for patients needing urgent and semi-urgent surgery were relatively unchanged compared to the previous quarter or last year (Figure 2).

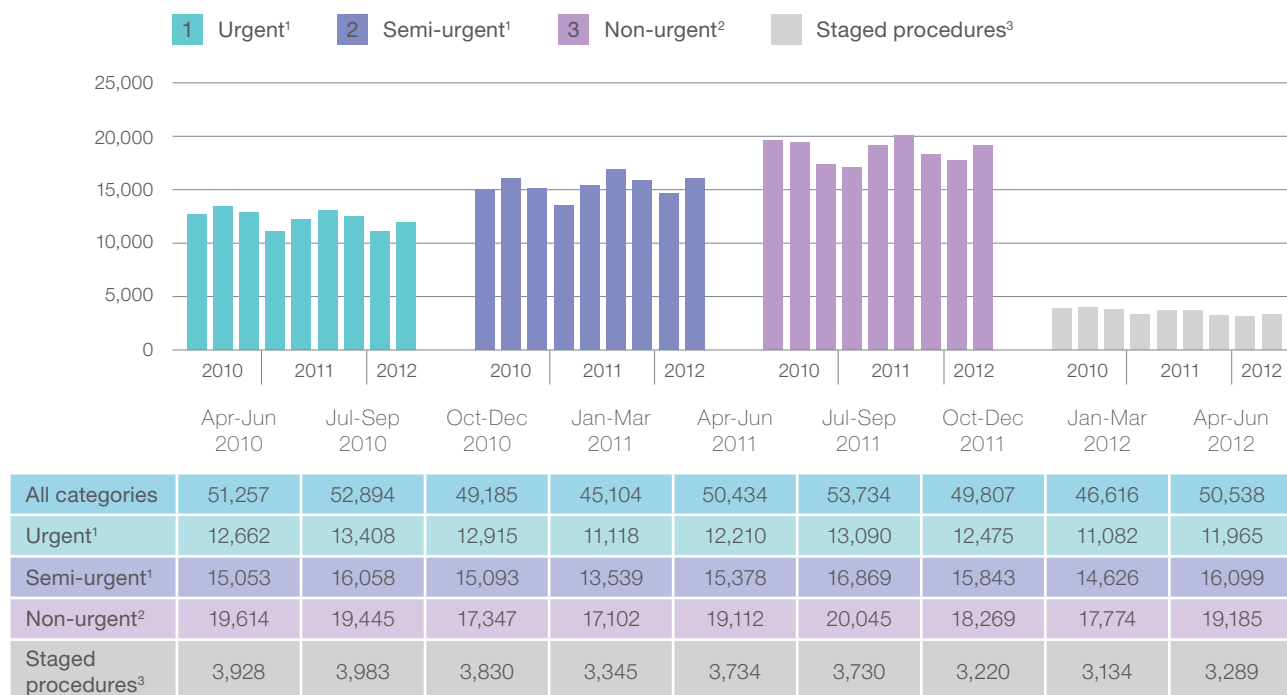
Find out how **your local** hospital

# PERFORMS

Results for more than  
**60 NSW hospitals**  
available at

[www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

Figure 1: Total number of elective surgery procedures conducted, by urgency category, April 2010 to June 2012



1. Excluding staged procedures.
2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.
3. Including non-urgent cystoscopy.

**Note:** Because of changes in methods and reporting, numbers of surgical procedures by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Ministry of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports* and Bureau Hospital *Quarterly* reports published prior to May 2011.

**Source:** Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 20 July 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Figure 2: NSW elective surgery median waiting time (days), by urgency category, April 2010 to June 2012

	Apr-Jun 2010	Jul-Sep 2010	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012
<b>Urgent<sup>1</sup></b>	11	11	11	11	12	11	11	11	11
<b>Semi-urgent<sup>1</sup></b>	49	48	46	50	48	47	47	51	49
<b>Non-urgent<sup>2</sup></b>	236	208	210	222	223	216	216	237	240

1. Excluding staged procedures.
2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

**Note:** Patients recorded as '*deferred*' when they received their surgery are allocated to '*ready for care*' urgency categories as appropriate.

**Note:** Because of changes in methods and reporting, numbers of surgical procedures by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Ministry of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports* and Bureau Hospital *Quarterly* reports published prior to May 2011.

**Source:** Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 20 July 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

# Emergency departments

## Arriving at the ED

More than half a million patients attended NSW public hospital EDs during April to June 2012, 7% more than the same quarter in 2011. The typical annual pattern sees ED attendances lowest during the April to June quarter, however, this year there has been an unexpected increase in ED attendances since the January to March quarter.

The number of ambulance arrivals has also increased by 7% compared with the same quarter in 2011.

During the quarter, 63% of ambulance patients were transferred into the care of the ED within 30 minutes of arrival. This compares with 69% in the last quarter and 65% in the same quarter last year (Figure 3). The target is 90%.

## Time to treatment

In April to June 2012, the median times to start treatment were largely unchanged compared to the same quarter in 2011 (Figure 4). This quarter, the median time to start treatment was:

- 8 minutes, one minute more than one year ago (triage 2)
- 23 minutes, the same as one year ago (triage 3)
- 32 minutes, the same as one year ago (triage 4)
- 30 minutes, the same as one year ago (triage 5).

The 95th percentile times to start treatment were slightly longer in each triage category. This quarter, 95% of patients began treatment within:

- 36 minutes, two minutes longer than one year ago (triage 2)
- 126 minutes, six minutes longer than one year ago (triage 3)
- 176 minutes, six minutes longer than one year ago (triage 4)
- 167 minutes, eight minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 5).

## Leaving the ED

The January to March 2012 issue of *Hospital Quarterly* saw the introduction of the National Emergency Access Target (NEAT) which measures the percentage of patients who left the ED within four hours of presentation against progressively increasing targets until 2015. The NSW 2012 target is 69%.

The Bureau changed how it reports the time from presentation until leaving the ED. The NEAT defines presentation as the earlier of arrival or triage time. As a result, the Bureau reports the time patients spent in the ED from the earlier of arrival or triage time rather than the earliest of arrival, triage or treatment time.

The Bureau reports the median and 95th percentile times by which all patients left the ED, rather than just admitted patients.

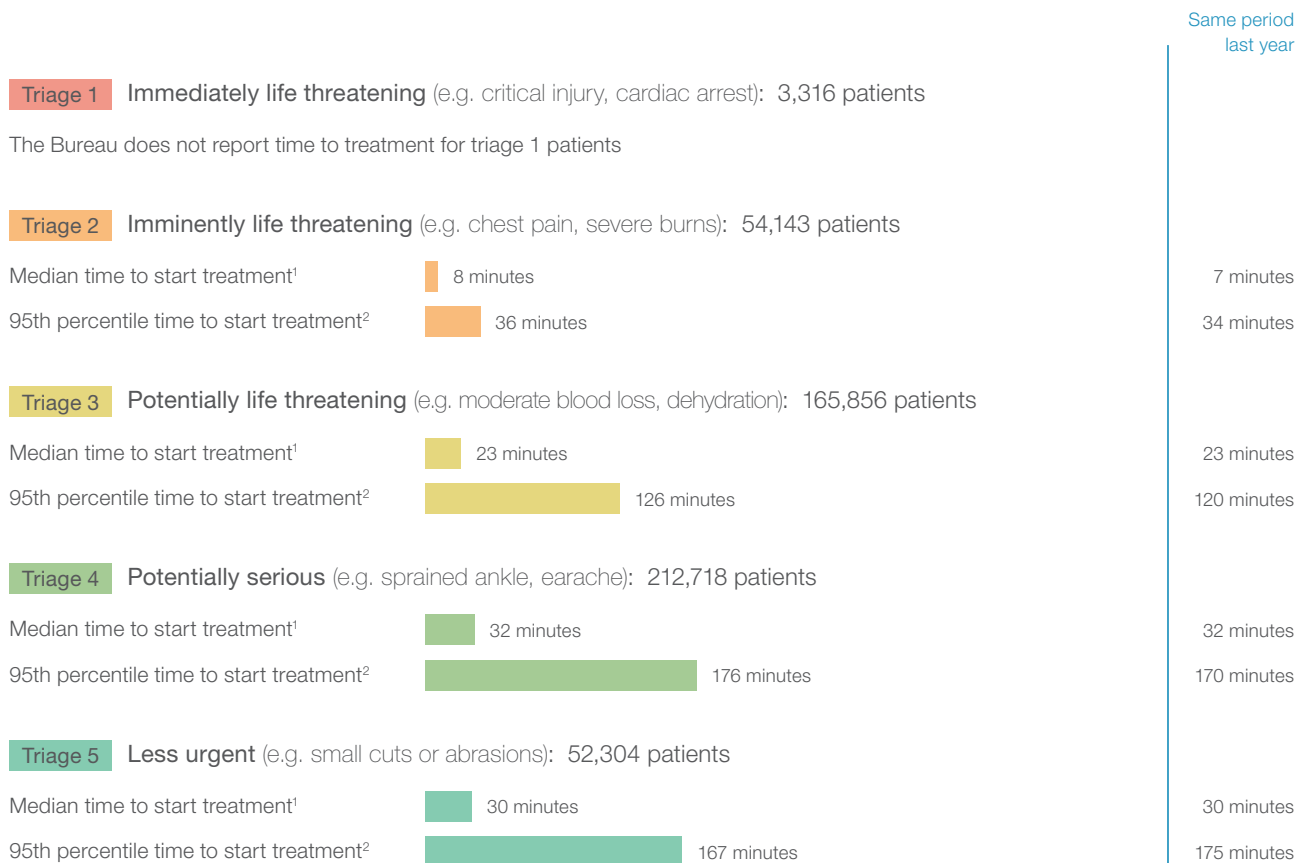
Further detail on the findings of this analysis can be found in the Bureau's *Technical Supplement: Emergency department measures, January to March 2012* and *Hospital Quarterly Background Paper: Approaches to reporting time measures of emergency department performance, Addendum June 2012*, available on the Bureau's website at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

Figure 3: Ambulance arrivals and percentage of patients accepted into the care of NSW emergency departments from an ambulance within 30 minutes of arrival, April 2010 to June 2012

	Apr-Jun 2010	Jul-Sep 2010	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012
Off-stretcher time (OST)	68%	64%	67%	66%	65%	61%	65%	69%	63%
Ambulance arrivals	122,648	126,628	128,655	125,246	128,011	132,947	133,158	131,942	137,090

Source: Data provided by NSW Ambulance Service on 27 July 2012.

Figure 4: Waiting times for treatment in NSW emergency departments, April to June 2012



1. The median is the time by which half of patients started treatment. The other half of patients took equal to or longer than this time.
2. The 95th percentile is the time by which 95% of patients started treatment. The final 5% of patients took equal to or longer than this time.

Note: Treatment time is the earliest time recorded when a healthcare professional gives medical care for the patient's presenting problems.

Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 July 2012.

In the April to June 2012 quarter, the median time to leaving the ED was six minutes more at three hours and 24 minutes, compared to the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was five minutes less at 12 hours and 59 minutes (Figure 5).

There are different ways that a patient can leave the ED. The majority of patients leave the ED after their treatment is complete or when they are admitted to hospital. Some patients choose

not to wait to begin or complete treatment, or are transferred to other hospitals. The way a patient leaves the ED is referred to as the mode of separation. The time that it takes for patients to leave the ED varies by the mode of separation.

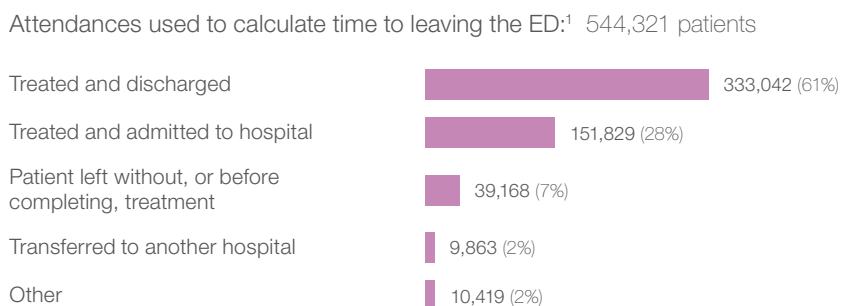
Figure 6 shows attendances at NSW EDs by mode of separation for the April to June 2012 quarter. Figure 7 shows the times in which patients left the ED by mode of separation for the April to June 2012 quarter.

Figure 5: Time from presentation until leaving the emergency department, April to June 2012



1. All emergency and non-emergency attendances at the emergency department (ED).
  2. All attendances that have a departure time.
  3. The median is the time by which half of patients left the ED. The other half of patients took equal to or longer than this time.
  4. The 95th percentile is the time by which 95% of patients left the ED. The final 5% of patients took equal to or longer than this time.
- Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 July 2012.

Figure 6: Leaving the emergency department by mode of separation, April to June 2012



1. All attendances that have a departure time.
- Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 July 2012.

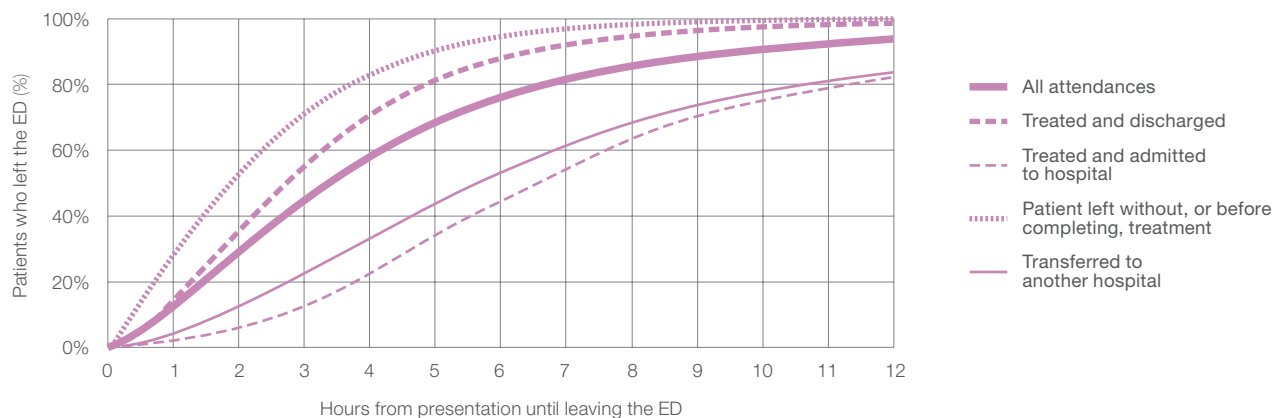
In the April to June 2012 quarter:

- Most patients (61%) received treatment in the ED and were discharged home (Figure 6). On average, these patients spent less time in the ED than other patients (Figure 7).
- About a quarter of patients (28%) received treatment in the ED and were subsequently admitted to a ward, a critical care unit or via an operating suite in the hospital (Figure 6). On average, these patients spent the most time in the ED (Figure 7).

- A small group of patients (2%) received treatment in the ED and were transferred to another hospital (Figure 6). On average, these patients also spent longer in the ED than patients who were discharged (Figure 7).
- Some patients (7%) left the ED without, or before completing, treatment (Figure 6). On average, these patients spent the shortest time in the ED (Figure 7).

The NEAT for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave EDs within four hours. In this quarter, 58% of patients left the ED within four hours of presentation (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Percentage of patients who left the emergency department, by time and mode of separation, April to June 2012



1 hour    2 hours    3 hours    4 hours    6 hours    8 hours    10 hours    12 hours

Treated and discharged	15%	36%	55%	71%	88%	95%	98%	99%
Treated and admitted to hospital	2%	6%	13%	23%	45%	64%	76%	83%
Patient left without, or before completing treatment	29%	53%	71%	83%	95%	98%	99%	100%
Transferred to another hospital	4%	13%	23%	34%	53%	69%	78%	84%
All attendances	13%	29%	45%	58%	76%	86%	91%	94%

Note: Time from presentation to the emergency department (ED) until recorded as leaving the ED.  
Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 July 2012.

## Download our reports

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, April to June 2012* and related reports are available at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

The suite of products includes:

- Three core modules on *Admitted Patients, Elective Surgery and Emergency Departments*
- *Performance Profiles: Elective surgery* (performance and activity reports for more than 80 hospitals and NSW as a whole)
- *Performance Profiles: Emergency department care* (activity reports for EDs in more than 60 hospitals and NSW as a whole)
- *Data Quality Assessments*
- *Technical Supplements*



## About the Bureau

The Bureau of Health Information provides the community, healthcare professionals and the NSW Parliament with timely, accurate and comparable information on the performance of the NSW public health system in ways that enhance the system's accountability and inform efforts to increase its beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of the people of NSW.

The Bureau is an independent, board-governed statutory health corporation. The conclusions in this report are those of the Bureau and no official endorsement by the NSW Ministry of Health, the NSW Department of Health or any other NSW public health organisation is intended or should be inferred.

### To contact the Bureau

**Telephone:** +61 2 8644 2100

**Fax:** +61 2 8644 2119

**Email:** [enquiries@bhi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@bhi.nsw.gov.au)

**Postal address:**

PO Box 1770

Chatswood

New South Wales 2057

Australia

**Web:** [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

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State Health Publication Number: (BHI) 120222

ISSN 1838-3238

Suggested citation: Bureau of Health Information. *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, April to June 2012. At a glance.* 3(2). Sydney (NSW); 2012.

Published September 2012

Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au) for any amendments.