

At a glance

Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals

July to September 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 July to September 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. The Bureau has enhanced its reporting on elective surgery in this issue by reporting by the specialty of the surgeon and common procedures and reporting on patients who are waiting to have their surgery.

Hospital Quarterly also reports on emergency department times to treatment, times to leaving the emergency department and performance against the National Emergency Access Target.

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

During the quarter	Jul-Sep 2012	Jul-Sep 2011	The difference
Admitted patient episodes	439,602 episodes	430,262 episodes	+9,340 (+2%)
Total bed days for acute admitted patient episodes	1,425,888 days	1,429,914 days	unchanged
Elective surgical procedures performed	54,216 procedures	54,082 procedures	unchanged
Elective surgery patients treated on time	93% on time	92% on time	+1 percentage point
Median waiting time for orthopaedic surgery	113 days	113 days	unchanged
Median waiting time for total knee replacement	286 days	300 days	-14 days (-5%)
Visits to NSW emergency departments	564,970 visits	543,568 visits	+21,402 (+4%)
People travelling to NSW EDs by ambulance	143,908 people	135,743 people	+8,165 (+6%)
Emergency attendances that were categorised as triage 2	56,570 attendances	48,278 attendances	+8,292 (+17%)
Median time to start treatment for triage 2 patients	8 minutes	8 minutes	unchanged
People leaving the ED within four hours of presentation (NEAT)	58% in 4 hours	57% in 4 hours	+1 percentage point

In NSW public hospitals during July to September 2012, on average for each day ...

4,778 people were admitted to hospital

589 people had elective surgery

6,141 people attended an ED

1,687 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), the data are not considered reliable enough to report for the July to September 2012 quarter. 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 54,216 elective procedures performed in NSW. This is 6% 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, the same amount of surgery was performed in the urgent category, although semi-urgent and non-urgent surgery both increased by 2%. Staged surgery decreased by 13%.

Urgent procedures made up 25% of all completed elective surgery for this quarter; semi-urgent made up 32%; non-urgent made up 38%; and staged procedures made up 6% of all completed elective surgery (Figure 1).

Cataract extraction was the most common procedure performed, with 5,732 patients receiving the procedure during the quarter.

On-time surgery

Most patients continued to receive their elective surgery on time during the quarter, with 93% of patients admitted to hospital within the time frame recommended by their surgeon. This is similar to the previous quarter (92%) and the same quarter in 2011 (92%).

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

Performance across urgency categories remained high, with 96% of patients in the urgent category; 92% of those considered semi-urgent and 92% of patients in the non-urgent category being admitted on time (Figure 2).

Surgery waiting times

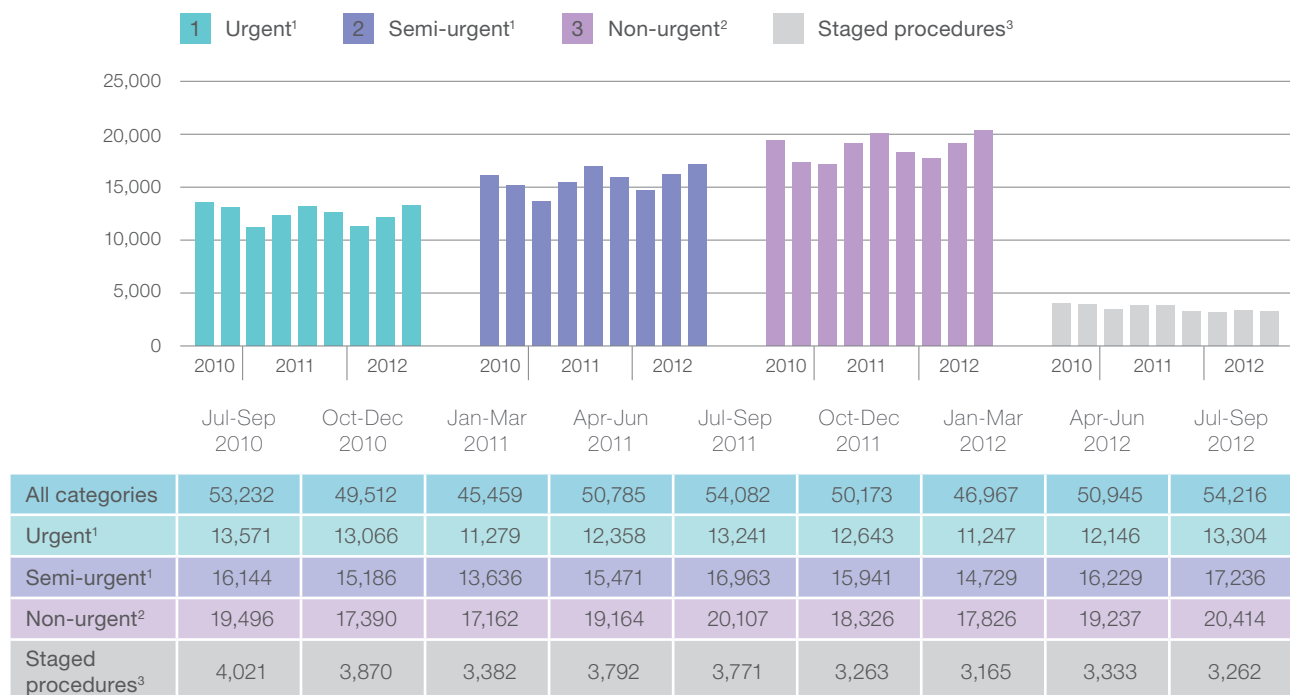
During the July to September 2012 quarter, median waiting times were 11 days for urgent surgery, 47 days for semi-urgent surgery and 229 days for non-urgent surgery.

The median waiting time varied by procedure. For example, the median waiting times were 286 days for total knee replacement and 28 days for coronary artery bypass graft (Figure 3).

Waiting list

As at 30 September 2012, there were 67,547 patients waiting for elective surgery, up 3% compared with the same quarter last year. The majority (80%) of these patients were assigned as non-urgent, 17% as semi-urgent and 3% as urgent (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Total number of elective surgery procedures conducted, by urgency category, July 2010 to September 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 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 26 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Figure 2: Percentage of elective surgery patients treated within recommended waiting time, by urgency category, July 2010 to September 2012

Urgency Category	Jul-Sep 2010	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012
All categories	91%	91%	90%	92%	92%	92%	91%	92%	93%
Urgent ¹	92%	93%	92%	93%	93%	94%	93%	94%	96%
Semi-urgent ¹	90%	91%	87%	92%	91%	91%	88%	91%	92%
Non-urgent ²	90%	91%	91%	92%	92%	92%	91%	91%	92%

1. Excluding staged procedures.
2. Excluding staged procedures and 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 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 26 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Figure 3: Median¹ waiting time (days) for patients who received elective surgery, by procedure,² July to September 2012

Procedure	Median waiting time (days) (Number of patients)	Same period last year
Abdominal hysterectomy	71 days (846 patients)	59
Cataract extraction	226 days (5,732 patients)	216
Cholecystectomy	59 days (1,804 patients)	58
Coronary artery bypass graft	28 days (217 patients)	25
Cystoscopy	30 days (3,946 patients)	32
Haemorrhoidectomy	76 days (320 patients)	59
Hysteroscopy	31 days (2,254 patients)	31
Inguinal herniorrhaphy	71 days (1,642 patients)	70
Myringoplasty / Tympanoplasty	278 days (112 patients)	321
Myringotomy	69 days (96 patients)	76
Other – General	22 days (1,814 patients)	22
Prostatectomy	55 days (689 patients)	62
Septoplasty	329 days (378 patients)	318
Tonsillectomy	252 days (1,309 patients)	200
Total hip replacement	157 days (782 patients)	164
Total knee replacement	286 days (1,564 patients)	300
Varicose veins stripping and ligation	100 days (420 patients)	85

1. This is the number of days it took for half the patients who received elective surgery during the period to be admitted and receive their surgery. The other half took equal to or longer than the median to be admitted for surgery.

2. For a description of these procedures see *Elective Surgery Glossary of Common Procedures, December 2012*.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 26 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Figure 4: Elective surgery waiting list, as at 30 September 2012

Urgency category	Number of patients (%)	Same period last year	Change since one year ago
1 Urgent ¹	2,040 (3%)	1,920	6%
2 Semi-urgent ¹	11,251 (17%)	11,346	-1%
3 Non-urgent ²	54,256 (80%)	52,381	4%

1. Excluding staged procedures.

2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 26 October 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 July to September 2012, 4% more than the same quarter in 2011. The greatest increase was seen in the imminently life threatening category (triage 2), with presentations 17% higher than the same quarter last year. These patients accounted for 10% of all emergency presentations.

The number of ambulance arrivals increased by 6% compared with the same quarter in 2011. During the quarter, 57% of ambulance patients were transferred into the care of the ED within 30 minutes of arrival. This compares with 64% in the last quarter and 61% in the same quarter last year (Figure 5). The target is 90%.

Time to treatment

The median times to start treatment were unchanged or slightly shorter compared to the same quarter in 2011 (Figure 6). This quarter, the median time to start treatment was:

- eight minutes, the same as one year ago (triage 2)
- 24 minutes, one minute less than one year ago (triage 3)
- 33 minutes, three minutes less than one year ago (triage 4)
- 30 minutes, four minutes less than one year ago (triage 5).

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

- 41 minutes, one minute shorter than one year ago (triage 2)

- 137 minutes, five minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 3)
- 184 minutes, eight minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 4)
- 174 minutes, 24 minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 5).

Leaving the ED

In the July to September 2012 quarter, the median time to leaving the ED was one minute less at three hours and 26 minutes, compared to the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was seven minutes more at 14 hours and 17 minutes (Figure 7).

During the July to September 2012 quarter:

- Most patients were discharged home. On average, these patients spent less time in the ED than other patients (Figure 8).
- About a quarter of ED patients were subsequently admitted to hospital (Figure 6). On average, these patients spent the most time in the ED (Figure 8).
- A small group of patients were transferred to another hospital. On average, these patients also spent longer in the ED than patients who were discharged (Figure 8).
- Some patients left the ED without, or before completing, treatment. On average, these patients spent the shortest time in the ED (Figure 8).

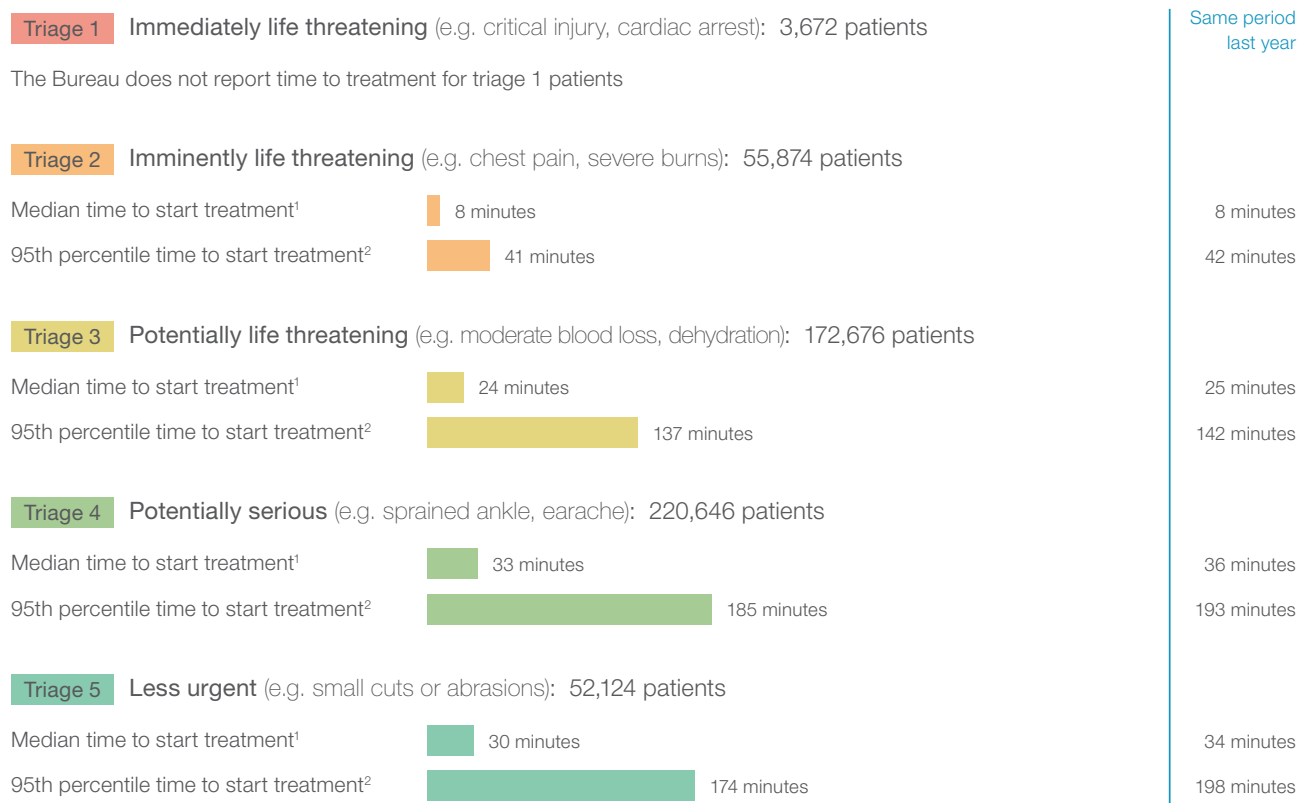
The National Emergency Access Target for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave EDs within four hours. In this quarter, 58% of patients left the ED within four hours of presentation (Figure 8).

Figure 5: Ambulance arrivals and percentage of patients accepted into the care of NSW emergency departments from an ambulance within 30 minutes of arrival, July 2010 to September 2012

	Jul-Sep 2010	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012
Off-stretcher time (OST)	65%	67%	67%	66%	61%	66%	69%	64%	57%
Ambulance arrivals	129,239	131,378	127,983	130,808	135,743	136,041	134,821	139,956	143,908

Source: Data provided by NSW Ambulance Service on 24 October 2012.

Figure 6: Waiting times for treatment in NSW emergency departments, July to September 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.

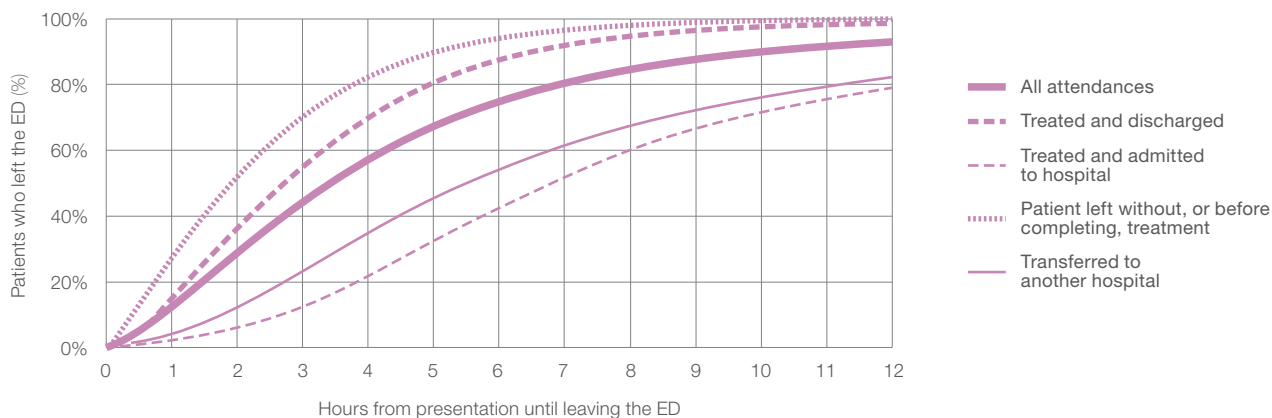
Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 22 October 2012.

Figure 7: Time from presentation until leaving the emergency department, July to September 2012

	July to September 2012	Same period last year
All attendances at the emergency department: ¹	564,970 patients	543,568
Attendances used to calculate time to leaving the ED: ²	564,946 patients	502,433
Median time to leaving the ED ³	3 hours and 26 minutes	3 hours and 27 minutes
95th percentile time to leaving the ED ⁴	14 hours and 17 minutes	14 hours and 10 minutes

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 22 October 2012.

Figure 8: Percentage of patients who left the emergency department, by time and mode of separation, July to September 2012



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

	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours	6 hours	8 hours	10 hours	12 hours
Treated and discharged	15%	36%	55%	70%	88%	95%	98%	99%
Treated and admitted to hospital	2%	6%	12%	22%	43%	60%	72%	79%
Patient left without, or before completing treatment	27%	52%	70%	83%	94%	98%	99%	100%
Transferred to another hospital	4%	12%	23%	35%	54%	67%	76%	82%
All attendances	13%	29%	44%	58%	75%	85%	90%	93%

Note: Time from presentation to the emergency department (ED) until recorded as leaving the ED.
 Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 22 October 2012.

Download our reports

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, July to September 2012* and related reports are available at 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

Postal address:

PO Box 1770

Chatswood

New South Wales 2057

Australia

Web: www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

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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 for any amendments.