

## Record number of patients through NSW emergency departments

The number of people visiting NSW emergency departments in October to December 2015 was the highest ever in a quarter, according to a report from the Bureau of Health Information (BHI).

BHI's *Hospital Quarterly* report provides the most up-to-date snapshot of activity and performance in NSW public hospitals.

BHI Chief Executive Jean-Frederic Levesque said that during the quarter, 664,837 patients visited emergency departments, an increase of 2% compared with the same quarter the previous year.

"NSW emergency departments continue to see more patients and more urgent cases," Dr Levesque said.

The report shows that 91% of patients had their care transferred from ambulance to emergency department staff within 30 minutes of arriving at hospital.

"The percentage of patients who had their care transferred from ambulance to emergency department staff within 30 minutes is the highest ever reported by BHI, and this improvement was particularly strong in many of the state's big metropolitan hospitals," Dr Levesque said.

Compared to the same quarter the previous year, the report shows that the times patients waited for treatment and spent in the emergency department remained relatively stable:

- The time that patients waited to start treatment in the emergency department on average was unchanged or one minute longer across all urgency categories
- The time patients spent in the emergency department on average was three minutes longer and is now two hours and 41 minutes
- The proportion of patients who left the emergency department within four hours of presentation dropped one percentage point to 74%.

"Patients spent more time in the emergency departments of bigger hospitals compared to other hospitals around the state," Dr Levesque said.

The report shows there were 53,438 elective surgeries performed, which is 2% less than the same quarter the previous year.

Overall elective surgery performance was stable with 97% of patients receiving their elective surgery within recommended timeframes.

"It is also important to look at how long on average people wait, so we are respecting both the clinical requirements as well as responding to patient expectations to receive timely treatment," Dr Levesque said.

"Despite the reduction in elective surgeries performed, on average there has been an increase in the amount of time patients wait for non-urgent surgery. This quarter half of patients waited 32 weeks for non-urgent surgery, which is nine days longer than the same quarter the previous year."

BHI has also published the second year of results from a survey of more than 18,000 emergency department patients who visited NSW public hospitals in 2014 -15. The results are available in a *Snapshot Report* and on BHI's online data portal, Healthcare Observer, at [bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://bhi.nsw.gov.au)

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