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MEDIA RELEASE

Report gives new insight into chronic disease hospitalisations in NSW

A new report has found that a very small number of patients with chronic lung or heart conditions account for more than half the bed days of all patients in NSW hospitals with those conditions.

Chronic conditions are a major health concern in NSW. They account for around 80% of the disease burden in Australia and represent the largest proportion of potentially avoidable hospitalisations.

The Bureau of Health Information analysed the hospitalisation records of 71,700 adults with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or congestive heart failure (CHF) in the year 2009-10. It found that these patients were admitted to hospital 100,000 times for many different reasons.

Adults with COPD or CHF spent more than half a million days in a NSW hospital bed, representing 8% of the total number of hospital bed days in 2009-10.

Bureau Acting Chief Executive Kim Browne said understanding how people with chronic conditions access hospitals is an important part of improving care.

"Many adults with chronic lung or heart conditions have other health conditions that are driving their use of hospitals," Ms Browne said.

"Clinicians and hospital managers will find the information in this report useful in understanding an important source of demand for their services and, perhaps, finding new ways to reduce the need for hospitalisation."

Hospital usage specifically for COPD and CHF was concentrated in a very small proportion of people with COPD or CHF. The report found that 4% of adults with COPD accounted for nearly two thirds of bed days used primarily to treat this condition. For CHF, 2% of adults accounted for almost half of the bed days used.

Of all the hospitalisations for these conditions, the rate of unplanned readmission within one month of discharge was 13% for COPD and 9% for CHF. Unplanned readmission rates vary across public hospitals. Hospitals with the highest rates were about three times as high as hospitals with the lowest rates.

The Agency for Clinical Innovation Chief Executive, Dr Nigel Lyons, welcomed the report.

"The Bureau's findings will help to further inform and develop best practice models of care for people with chronic diseases. Healthcare professionals across NSW can use this information to look at ways to reduce or better manage illnesses that require hospitalisation."

Chronic Disease Care: Another piece of the picture is the second report from the Bureau of Health Information on chronic disease care. It includes hospitalisation patterns and readmissions for 35 public hospitals and Local Health Districts in NSW.

SPOKESPERSON: Kim Browne, Acting Chief Executive, Bureau of Health Information
MEDIA CONTACT: Karen Perini, 02 8644 2113 or 0408 472 625 (Bureau)
Anna Nicholes, 02 8644 2169 or 0400 431 199 (ACI)