

At a glance

Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals

January to March 2013

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 January to March 2013.

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 reports on the wait times by the speciality of the surgeon, by common procedures and by urgency category. The number of patients who have been waiting for more than 12 months is also reported.

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 and emergency department care in more than 80 hospitals is available in the Performance Profiles on the Bureau's website www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

During the quarter	Jan-Mar 2013	Jan-Mar 2012	The difference
Admitted patient episodes	422,350 episodes	412,711 episodes	+9,639 (+2%)
Total bed days for acute admitted patient episodes	1,291,717 days	1,347,022 days	-55,305 (-4%)
Elective surgical procedures performed	48,013 procedures	48,497 procedures	-484 (-1%)
Elective surgery patients treated on time	95% on time	91% on time	+4 percentage points
Median waiting time for orthopaedic surgery	130 days	118 days	+12 days (+10%)
Median waiting time for total knee replacement	312 days	315 days	-3 days (-1%)
Visits to NSW emergency departments	575,675 visits	562,646 visits	+13,059 (+2%)
People travelling to NSW EDs by ambulance	138,082 people	134,821 people	+3,261 (+2%)
Emergency attendances that were categorised as triage 2	58,570 attendances	50,628 attendances	+7,942 (+16%)
Median time to start treatment for triage 2 patients	8 minutes	8 minutes	unchanged
People leaving the ED within four hours of presentation (NEAT)	65% in 4 hours	60% in 4 hours	+5 percentage points

In NSW public hospitals during January to March 2013, on average for each day ...

4,693 people were admitted to hospital

534 people had elective surgery

6,397 people attended an ED

1,748 people were admitted to hospital from an ED

Elective surgery

Number of procedures performed

During this quarter there were 48,013 elective procedures performed in NSW. This is 11% lower than the previous quarter (in line with the usual season pattern), and 1% lower than the same quarter in 2012.

Compared with the same quarter one year ago, less surgery was performed in the urgent (down 9%) and staged surgery (down 1%) categories. The semi-urgent category remained the same and the non-urgent category increased by 4%.

Urgent procedures made up 22% of all completed elective surgery for this quarter; semi-urgent made up 31%; non-urgent made up 40%; and staged procedures made up 7% of all completed elective surgery (Figure 1).

Cataract extraction was the most common procedure performed, with 5,036 patients receiving the procedure during the quarter.

On time surgery

Most patients continued to receive their elective surgery on time during the quarter, with 95% of patients admitted to hospital within the time frame recommended by their surgeon. This is 2% higher than the previous quarter and 4% higher than the same quarter in 2012.

Performance across urgency categories remained high, with 99% of patients in the urgent category; 94% of those considered semi-urgent and 94% of patients in the non-urgent category being admitted on time (Figure 2).

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

Surgery waiting times

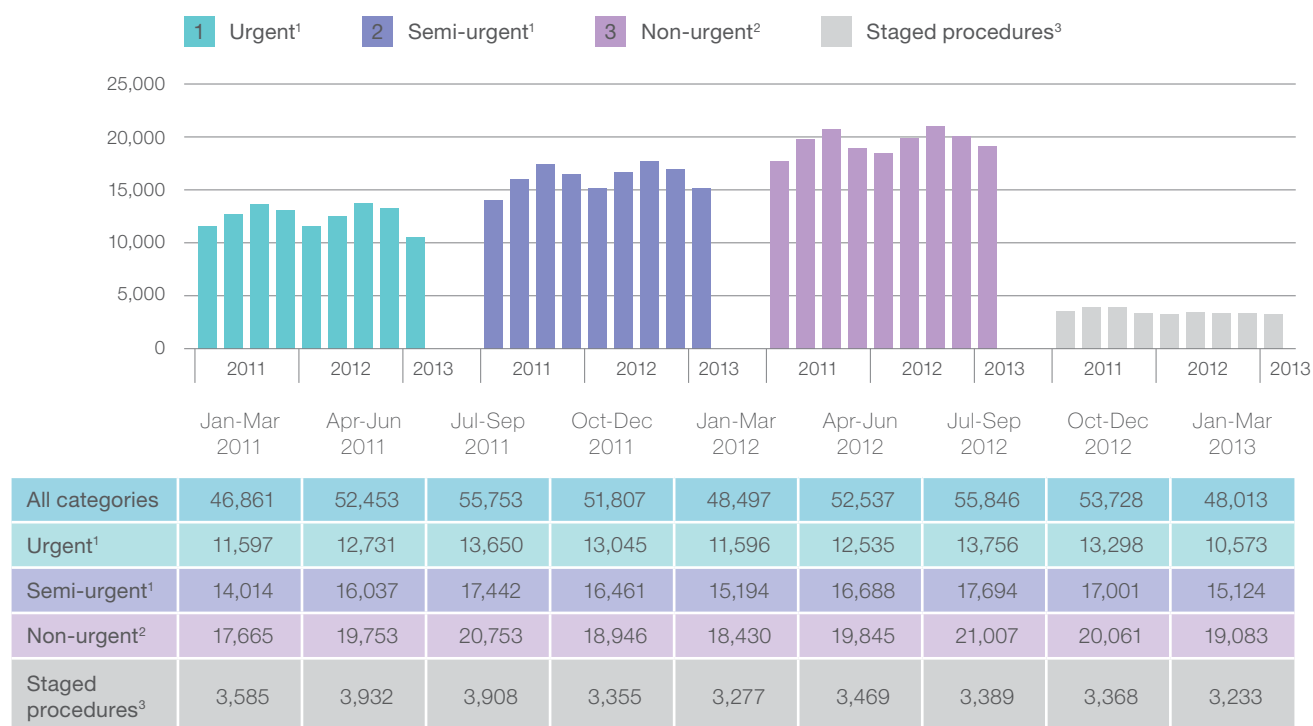
During the January to March 2013 quarter, median waiting times were 10 days for urgent surgery, 47 days for semi-urgent surgery and 230 days for non-urgent surgery.

The median waiting time varied by procedure. For example, the median waiting times were 312 days for total knee replacement and 27 days for coronary artery bypass graft (Figure 3).

Waiting list

As at 31 March 2013, there were 69,445 patients waiting for elective surgery, down 1% compared with the same quarter last year. The majority (81%) of these patients were assigned as non-urgent, 16% as semi-urgent and 3% as urgent (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Total number of elective surgery procedures conducted, by urgency category, January 2011 to March 2013



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 of Health Information Hospital Quarterly reports** published prior to May 2011.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for all quarters from July 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 July 2011.

Figure 2: Percentage of elective surgery patients treated within recommended waiting time, by urgency category, January 2011 to March 2013

	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012	Oct-Dec 2012	Jan-Mar 2013
All categories	90%	92%	92%	92%	91%	92%	93%	93%	95%
Urgent ¹	92%	93%	93%	94%	94%	94%	96%	96%	99%
Semi-urgent ¹	87%	91%	90%	91%	88%	91%	92%	92%	94%
Non-urgent ²	92%	92%	92%	91%	91%	91%	92%	91%	94%

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 of Health Information Hospital Quarterly reports** published prior to May 2011.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for all quarters from July 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 July 2011.

Figure 3: Median¹ waiting time (days) for patients who received elective surgery, by procedure,² January to March 2013

		Same period last year
Abdominal hysterectomy	62 days (606 patients)	62
Cataract extraction	249 days (5,036 patients)	249
Cholecystectomy	61 days (1,593 patients)	68
Coronary artery bypass graft	27 days (223 patients)	23
Cystoscopy	30 days (3,005 patients)	35
Haemorrhoidectomy	76 days (217 patients)	85
Hysteroscopy	33 days (1,815 patients)	36
Inguinal herniorrhaphy	80 days (1,432 patients)	79
Myringoplasty / Tympanoplasty	329 days (76 patients)	317
Myringotomy	76 days (68 patients)	88
Other – General	23 days (1,547 patients)	24
Prostatectomy	67 days (584 patients)	70
Septoplasty	335 days (365 patients)	323
Tonsillectomy	262 days (1,201 patients)	225
Total hip replacement	206 days (666 patients)	202
Total knee replacement	312 days (1,302 patients)	315
Varicose veins stripping and ligation	103 days (302 patients)	102

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: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for all quarters from July 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 July 2011.

Figure 4: Elective surgery waiting list, as at 31 March 2013

Patients ready for surgery on waiting list by urgency category: 69,445 patients

		Same period last year	Change since one year ago
1 Urgent ¹	1,980 (3%)	2,158	-8%
2 Semi-urgent ¹	10,954 (16%)	11,399	-4%
3 Non-urgent ²	56,511 (81%)	56,619	0%

1. Excluding staged procedures.

2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: NSW Health, *Waiting List Collection On-line System*. Data for all quarters from July 2011 to March 2013 extracted on 17 April 2013. Data for all previous quarters extracted on 15 July 2011.

Emergency departments

Arriving at the ED

More than half a million patients attended NSW public hospital EDs during January to March 2013, 2% more than the same quarter in 2012. The greatest increase was seen in the emergency category (triage 2), with presentations 16% higher than the same quarter last year. These patients accounted for 11% of all emergency presentations.

The number of ambulance arrivals increased by 2% compared with the same quarter in 2012 (Figure 5). This report does not include ambulance performance measures. The Bureau is analysing options for reporting on the time it takes for patients to be transferred from the ambulance into the care of ED staff. See page 5 of the Emergency Department module for more detail.

Time to treatment

The median times to start treatment were the same or shorter compared to the same quarter in 2012 (Figure 6). This quarter, the median time to start treatment was:

- eight minutes, the same as one year ago (triage 2)
- 21 minutes, one minute less than one year ago (triage 3)
- 28 minutes, three minutes less than one year ago (triage 4)
- 27 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:

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

- 109 minutes, five minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 3)
- 156 minutes, 12 minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 4)
- 151 minutes, 22 minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 5).

Leaving the ED

In the January to March 2013 quarter, the median time to leaving the ED was 10 minutes less at three hours and four minutes, compared to the same quarter in 2012. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was 46 minutes less at 11 hours and 0 minutes (Figure 7).

During the January to March 2013 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 admitted to hospital. 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 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).

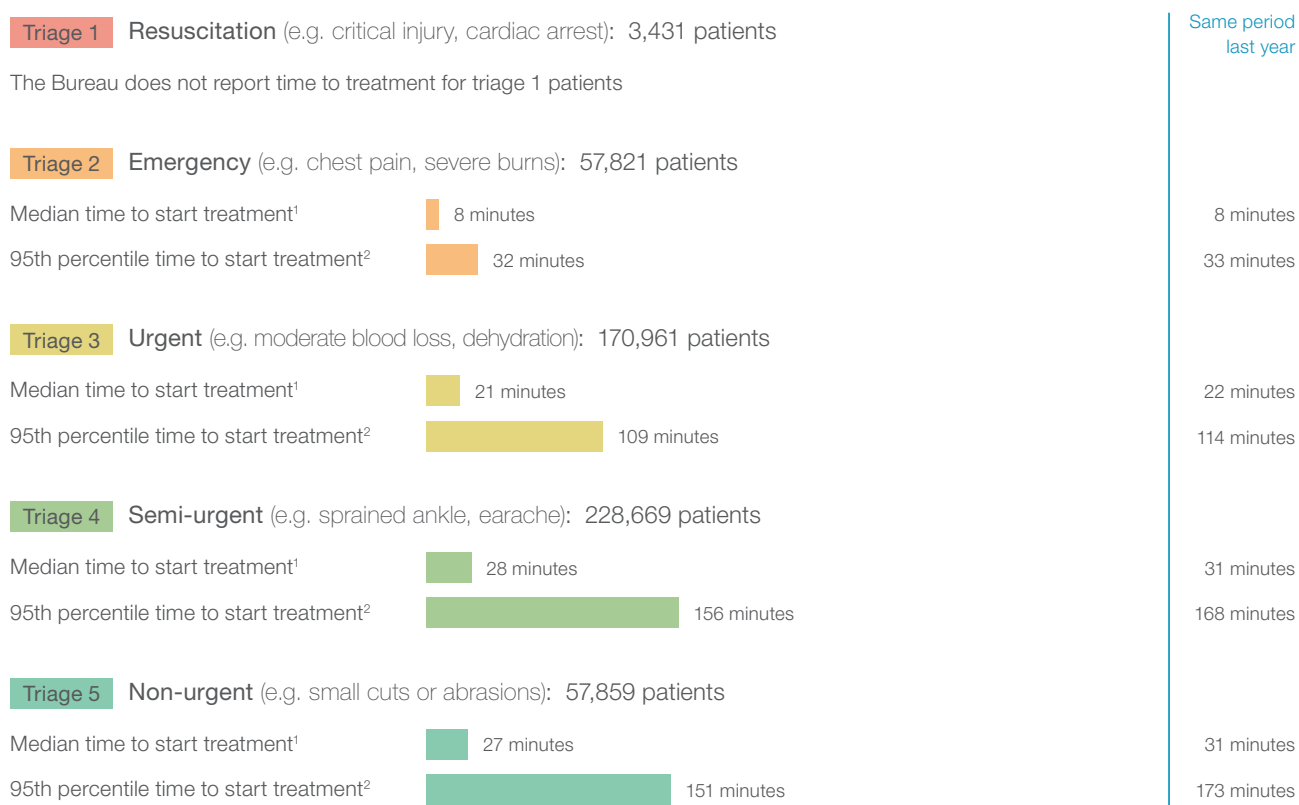
The National Emergency Access Target for NSW in 2013 is for 71% of all patients to leave EDs within four hours. In this quarter, 65% of patients left the ED within four hours of presentation (Figure 8).

Figure 5: Arrivals by ambulance to NSW emergency departments, January 2011 to March 2013

	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012	Oct-Dec 2012	Jan-Mar 2013
Ambulance arrivals	127,983	130,808	135,743	136,041	134,821	139,956	143,908	140,362	138,082

Source: Data provided by Ambulance Service of NSW on 26 April 2013.

Figure 6: Waiting times for treatment in NSW emergency departments, January to March 2013



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.

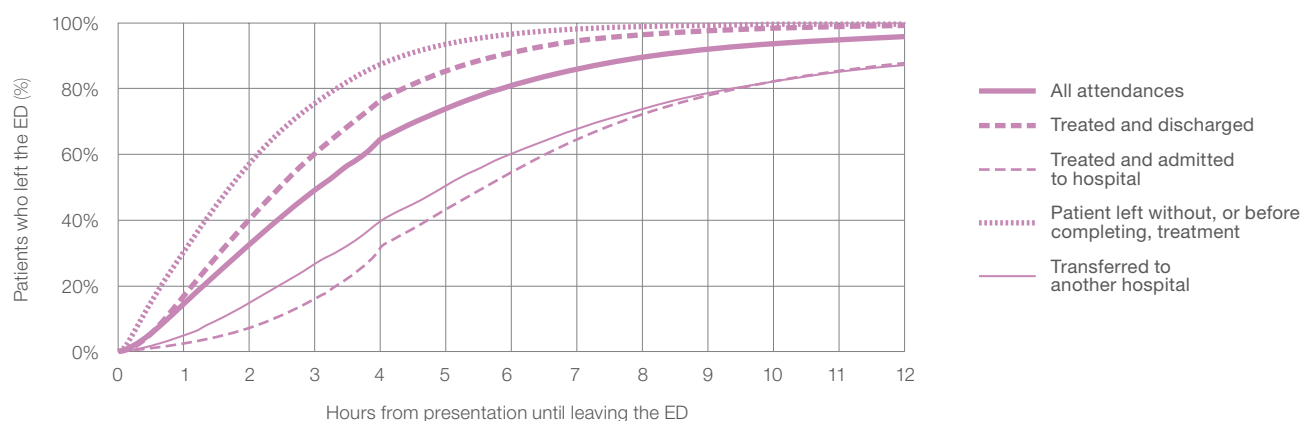
Source: NSW Health, *Health Information Exchange*. Data extracted on 19 April 2013.

Figure 7: Time from presentation until leaving the emergency department, January to March 2013

All attendances at the emergency department: ¹ 575,675 patients	Same period last year	562,646
Attendances used to calculate time to leaving the ED: ² 575,561 patients		554,414
Median time to leaving the ED ³	3 hours and 4 minutes	3 hours and 14 minutes
95th percentile time to leaving the ED ⁴	11 hours and 0 minutes	11 hours and 46 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: NSW Health, Health Information Exchange. Data extracted on 19 April 2013.

Figure 8: Percentage of patients who left the emergency department, by time and mode of separation, January to March 2013



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

Treated and discharged	17%	40%	60%	77%	91%	96%	98%	99%
Treated and admitted to hospital	2%	7%	16%	32%	55%	72%	82%	88%
Patient left without, or before completing treatment	31%	57%	76%	88%	97%	99%	100%	100%
Transferred to another hospital	5%	15%	27%	40%	60%	74%	82%	87%
All attendances	14%	33%	49%	65%	81%	90%	94%	96%

Note: Time from presentation to the emergency department (ED) until recorded as leaving the ED.
Source: NSW Health, Health Information Exchange. Data extracted on 19 April 2013.

Download our reports

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, January to March 2013* and related reports are available at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

The suite of products includes:

- *At a Glance* summarising the three core modules
- Three core modules titled *Admitted Patients, Elective Surgery and Emergency Departments*
- Activity and performance profiles about emergency department care and elective surgery for more than 80 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 Minister for Health, the NSW Ministry of Health or any other NSW public health organisation is intended or should be inferred.

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State Health Publication Number: (BHI) 130085
ISSN 1838-3238

Suggested citation: Bureau of Health Information
*Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals,
January to March 2013. At a glance. 4(1).*
Sydney (NSW); 2013.

Published June 2013

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.