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More emergency department patients treated on time in NSW public hospitals

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its *Healthcare Quarterly* report showing more emergency department patients were treated on time in the July to September 2018 quarter, compared to the same quarter last year.

There were 717,741 presentations to emergency departments in NSW public hospitals, down 3.2%. Key emergency department findings include:

- more than seven in 10 patients (73.4%) were treated within clinically recommended timeframes, up 2.9 percentage points compared to the same quarter last year
- about seven in 10 patients (71.4%) spent four hours or less in the emergency department, up 2.3 percentage points
- the median time patients spent in the emergency department was two hours and 52 minutes, down five minutes.

BHI chief executive Dr Diane Watson said the latest issue of *Healthcare Quarterly* compares results from July to September 2018, when there was a relatively mild flu season, to the same quarter in 2017, when there was a severe flu season.

“While we need to take this year’s milder flu season into consideration when looking at these results, it is still encouraging to see results at NSW level have improved compared with the same quarter last year,” Dr Watson said.

However, the improvements at NSW level were not reflected across all public hospitals.

“The report shows while many hospitals have improved the timeliness of care in their emergency departments, others have not improved or their performance has declined. Hospitals can look at these results, including those of their peers, and see where there are opportunities to improve,” Dr Watson said.

There were more than 297,634 ambulance responses in the July to September 2018 quarter (down 4.5% compared to the same quarter last year) and, of those responses, 135,477 were categorised as emergencies (down 6.5%).

Of those emergency responses, 6,622 were for the highest priority, life-threatening cases. Paramedics reached more than seven in 10 (73.7%) of these cases within 10 minutes, up 3.1 percentage points.

There were 59,778 elective surgical procedures performed in the July to September quarter, up 2.6% compared to the same quarter last year. The largest increase was in the number of urgent procedures (12,836 surgeries), which were up by 4.5%.

Median waiting times for elective surgery in NSW public hospitals were 11 days for urgent procedures in the July to September 2018 quarter (up one day compared to the same quarter last year), 44 days for semi-urgent procedures (up one day) and 228 days for non-urgent surgeries (up 15 days). Almost all (97.6%) elective surgical procedures were performed within clinically recommended timeframes.

The *Healthcare Quarterly* report is available at bhi.nsw.gov.au