

MEDIA RELEASE

Longest ED waits reduced in NSW public hospitals

The latest *Hospital Quarterly* from the Bureau of Health Information finds NSW emergency department patients are generally waiting less time for care to begin than a year ago.

“From January to March 2012 we saw an increase in patients at emergency departments but the time they waited for treatment to start was shorter or the same as a year ago,” Bureau A/Chief Executive Kim Browne said.

“The greatest drop in the time to start treatment was for potentially serious patients (triage 4). At the 95th percentile, the time was 18 minutes less than a year ago. The Bureau measures the 95th percentile as an indicator of the longest time that patients wait.”

Across NSW, the median time that patients left the emergency department was three hours and 19 minutes after presentation. At the 95th percentile, the time was 11 hours and 55 minutes, 41 minutes less than the same quarter last year.

“These performance improvements come as NSW public hospitals continue to face increased demand with more patients attending emergency departments, being admitted to hospital and undergoing elective surgery,” Ms Browne said.

For the first time in *Hospital Quarterly*, the Bureau is reporting on a new measure to show how emergency departments in NSW perform against the National Emergency Access Target.

The target for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave emergency departments within four hours. In January to March this year, 59% of patients left NSW emergency departments within four hours.

Most elective surgery patients continued to receive their surgery on time. The median waiting times for patients needing urgent surgery procedures remained the same as the first quarter last year, and increased by one day for semi-urgent patients. The median waiting time for non-urgent surgery increased by 16 days compared to the same time last year.

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