

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW healthcare performance ranked against Australia and 10 other countries

Deaths from heart disease and cancer have dropped dramatically in NSW over the past decade, making the state an international leader in this area, a new report shows.

Healthcare in Focus: How NSW compares internationally, shows that with a 47% drop in heart disease deaths, NSW joins the Netherlands and Norway in leading the way on cardiovascular health gains. The state also experienced marked decreases in deaths from stroke (37%) and colorectal cancer (30%) over a decade.

The first annual report from the Bureau of Health Information, *Healthcare in Focus* compares NSW to the rest of Australia and 10 other countries.

"The report shows NSW does well on the international stage but should seize opportunities to improve healthcare," Bureau chief executive Dr Diane Watson said.

"It also shows NSW gets value for its health dollar. Higher health spending does not necessarily mean better healthcare. There are some countries that spend much more than NSW and have worse health outcomes."

The Bureau's report finds that in 2010, surveyed adults in NSW and in the rest of Australia are positive about the care they receive but say change is needed to make the healthcare system work better.

"Most NSW adults (75%) are confident they will receive the most effective treatment if they become seriously ill, though more adults are confident in this area in other countries," Dr Watson said.

Healthcare in Focus uses almost 90 measures of performance to track care across NSW so healthcare professionals can use this information to improve.

"Management of chronic disease, reducing unnecessary hospital use and better flow of patient information are all areas where improvements could have a significant impact," Dr Watson said.

"In this report we see that by addressing things such as high rates of diabetes complications, caesarean rates and numbers of people returning to hospital with avoidable complications, the system could be strengthened.

"Likewise, patients are noticing that there is a gap in the flow of information between emergency departments, hospitals and their usual doctor."

NSW people are generally happy with the care they receive from their GP, rating it as excellent (42%) or very good (35%). The state's GPs also do well on measures such as blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring. However, more than 60% of people found it difficult to access after-hours medical care without going to emergency. Patients also report cost can be a barrier to accessing doctors, tests and treatments.

"The Bureau's report identifies areas where NSW can learn from its successes and focuses on where the state can do better in delivering high-quality, safe healthcare to people when they need it," Dr Watson said.

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