

## **MEDIA BACKGROUND**

### **Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals April to June 2012**

#### **Emergency Departments, April to June 2012**

More than half a million patients (546,032 patients) attended NSW public hospital emergency departments (EDs) from April to June 2012. This is 7% more than a year ago.

Almost half of all emergency attendances (44%) were for patients in the potentially serious (triage 4) category; 32% were in the potentially life threatening category (triage 3), 12% in the lowest urgency category (triage 5) and 10% in the imminently life threatening category (triage 2). Patients in the immediately life threatening category (triage 1) accounted for less than 1% of all ED patients.

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#### **Arrivals by ambulance**

From April to June 2012 there were 137,090 arrivals by ambulance to NSW public hospital emergency departments. This is a 7% increase since a year ago.

For patients arriving by ambulance, 63% were transferred into the care of emergency department staff within 30 minutes. This compares with 65% a year ago and 68% two years ago.

*page 6 figure 4*

#### **The median and 95th percentile**

Reporting on the times that the median and 95th percentile of patients start treatment or leave the ED is a common international approach to measuring wait times.

The median times are the times by which half of patients started treatment or left the ED.

*For example: if the median time to start treatment is 23 minutes, this means half of patients started treatment between 0 and 23 minutes after arriving at the ED. The other half waited 23 minutes or longer for treatment.*

The 95th percentile times are the times by which 95% of patients started treatment or left the ED. We use this value to indicate the longest times that patients waited for treatment or to leave the ED.

*For example: if the 95th percentile time to treatment is 125 minutes, this means 95% of patients were seen between 0 and 125 minutes after arriving at the ED. The last 5% of patients (or 1 in 20) waited 125 minutes or longer for treatment.*

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#### **Time to start treatment**

At a state level, we report the median times and 95th percentile times by which emergency department (ED) patients start treatment for triage categories 2 to 5.

- The Bureau does not report time to treatment for triage 1 patients (e.g. critical injury, cardiac arrest) as this category is extremely time sensitive, representing a 2 minute window to begin treatment.

- Triage 2 – imminently life threatening (e.g. chest pain, severe burns)  
The median time to start treatment was 8 minutes and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 36 minutes.
- Triage 3 – potentially life threatening (e.g. moderate blood loss, dehydration)  
The median time to start treatment was 23 minutes and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 126 minutes.
- Triage 4 – potentially serious (e.g. sprained ankle, earache)  
The median time to start treatment was 32 minutes and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 176 minutes.
- Triage 5 – less urgent (e.g. small cuts or abrasions)  
The median time to start treatment was 30 minutes and 95th percentile time to start treatment was 167 minutes. *page 7 figure 5*

The median times to start treatment were largely unchanged compared to the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile times to start treatment were longer in each triage category, except for triage 5. *page 7 figure 5*

There is variation between hospitals when comparing time from presentation until treatment by triage category. Following are examples of the ranges of results from April to June 2012 for larger hospitals using one of the two predominant information systems:

- The median time to start treatment for all triage 2 patients was 6 minutes at Blacktown, Hornsby and Ku-Ring-Gai, and Orange hospitals compared with 12 minutes at Sutherland Hospital.
- The 95th percentile time to start treatment for triage 2 patients was 16 minutes at Concord Hospital, compared with 59 minutes at Liverpool Hospital.
- The median time to start treatment for all triage 4 patients was 20 minutes at Nepean Hospital, compared with 57 minutes at Canterbury Hospital.
- The 95th percentile time to start treatment for triage 4 patients was 117 minutes at Sutherland Hospital, compared with 265 minutes at Wollongong Hospital. *page 14*

### **Leaving the emergency department**

Hospital Quarterly now reports how NSW hospitals are performing against the National Emergency Access Target (NEAT). The NEAT for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave emergency departments within four hours. In April to June this year, 58% of patients left NSW emergency departments within four hours. *page 13*

The median time to leaving the ED for all patients was three hours and 24 minutes. This is longer than the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was 12 hours and 59 minutes. This is shorter than the same quarter in 2011. *page 10*

The patients who received treatment in the ED and were subsequently transferred to a ward, a critical care unit or an operating suit in the hospital generally spent the longest time in the ED of all ED patients. *page 11*

There is variation between hospitals when comparing the time to leaving the ED. The following examples show the ranges of results from April to June 2012 for larger hospitals using one of the two predominant information systems:

- The median time to leaving the ED ranged from two hours and 54 minutes at Mona Vale and District Hospital to 5 hours and 32 minutes at Blacktown and Liverpool Hospitals.
- The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED ranged from 8 hours and 54 minutes at Concord Hospital to 23 hours and 19 minutes at Blacktown Hospital. *page 14*

## **Elective Surgery, April to June 2012**

During this quarter, 50,538 elective surgery procedures were completed in NSW public hospitals or in facilities contracted by NSW public hospitals.

This is 8% higher than the 46,616 surgical procedures completed from January to March 2012 (previous quarter) but similar to the 50,434 surgical procedures completed in the same quarter in 2011. *page 3*

Due to a major upgrade to the information system at The Children's Hospital at Westmead during the April to June 2012 quarter, the data are not considered reliable enough to report. Results from this hospital are excluded from NSW current and previous quarters in this edition of *Hospital Quarterly* to enable comparisons over time. This hospital accounts for approximately 3% of elective surgery activity but its removal does not have a large effect on waiting times for NSW. *page 3*

From April to June 2012, 92% of all elective surgery patients were admitted within the recommended time for the urgency of their care. For urgent surgery 94% of patients were admitted within the recommended 30 days, 91% of semi-urgent patients were admitted within 90 days and 91% of non-urgent patients were admitted within 365 days. *page 5*

The median waits for urgent and semi-urgent surgery were stable. The median wait time for non-urgent surgery was 240 days, 17 days more than the same quarter in 2011. *page 6*

## **Admitted Patients, April to June 2012**

There were 426,358 admitted patient episodes from April to June 2012. This is 3% more than a year ago. The average length of stay was unchanged at 3.4 bed days.