

NSW healthcare performance ranked against 11 countries

A new report on the NSW healthcare system shows the state matches or outperforms comparable systems around the world on 80% of measures.

The Bureau of Health Information's (BHI) annual *Healthcare in Focus 2016* report compares NSW's healthcare performance to 11 countries and other Australian states and territories.

BHI Acting Chief Executive Dr Kim Sutherland said that while the system performs well overall there are still areas where improvement is possible.

"New South Wales performs consistently well when aspects of our healthcare system are measured against those in comparator countries. The report finds that no country had lower spending and better health than NSW," Dr Sutherland said.

"Deaths from heart attack and stroke in NSW have fallen sharply over the past decade.

"Healthcare is accessible to most people in NSW and patients generally receive it in a timely and safe way."

The report shows that despite growing patient numbers, the proportion of people treated in emergency departments within recommended times has increased in the past five years and almost all elective surgery is performed on time.

Patients in NSW also report positive experiences of hospital care:

- In 2016, more than seven in 10 patients said they were 'definitely' involved in decisions about their healthcare – a significantly higher result than six other countries
- NSW patients also experienced respectful care, with a higher proportion saying they were treated with respect than in any other country surveyed.

However, the report shows that there are areas where NSW was outperformed including some key indicators of safety and value, and median waiting times for key surgical procedures:

- NSW patients experience higher rates of post-surgical complications compared to other countries
- Inappropriate use of procedures such as knee arthroscopy persists, with 70% of these surgeries being performed on patients for whom there was no prospect of benefit
- Median waiting times for cataract surgery, and hip and knee replacements are longer than many other countries, particularly among patients from lower socioeconomic areas.

The report also shows that, despite recent improvement, 15% of patients are being readmitted to NSW hospital psychiatric units within 28 days of discharge.

"While not always avoidable, readmission rates to public hospital psychiatric units varied from six to 19 percent across NSW hospitals, which suggests there may be potential for improvement," Dr Sutherland said.