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Increased activity for public hospitals and ambulance services in NSW

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its *Healthcare Quarterly* report showing that public hospitals and ambulance services in NSW were very busy during the April to June 2018 quarter, with increased activity compared with the same quarter last year.

There were almost 700,000 presentations to emergency departments, an increase of 1.2% compared with the same quarter in 2017. The report shows that the timeliness of care provided in emergency departments remained relatively stable:

- The percentage of patients whose treatment started within clinically recommended timeframes was 76.6%, up 0.5 percentage points.
- Almost three quarters of patients (74.0%) spent four hours or less in the emergency department, up 0.2 percentage points.
- More than nine in 10 (91.6%) patients who arrived by ambulance had their care transferred to emergency department staff within 30 minutes – down 0.3 percentage points.

While the performance in emergency departments is stable at NSW level, there are considerable differences in performance at hospital level.

“You would expect to see wide variation in performance across NSW public hospitals, but even when we look within peer groups – hospitals of a similar size – we see that some are performing quite well compared to their peers. Meanwhile, the report highlights opportunities for other similar hospitals to improve,” said Hilary Rowell, A/Chief Executive.

Ms Rowell said the results over time are also an important factor to consider. “When we compare these results to the same quarter last year, we can see that some hospitals show significant improvements in the timeliness of care provided, even while presentations to their emergency departments have notably increased. Meanwhile, other hospitals show declines in the timeliness of care provided, despite stable activity or modest increases in presentations to their emergency departments.”

The report shows that there were more than 282,000 ambulance responses during the quarter (up 2.9%) and, of those responses, 125,857 were emergencies.

The number of emergency responses for which an ambulance arrived within 15 minutes of a triple zero call being received was 62.3%, down 1.4 percentage points.

Of those emergency responses, more than 5,800 (up 6.1%) were for the highest priority, life-threatening cases. Paramedics reached 72.7% of these cases within 10 minutes (down 0.1 percentage points), although nine in ten were reached in less than 15 minutes.

There were 475,050 admitted patient episodes to NSW public hospitals in the April to June 2018 quarter and a total of 59,176 elective surgical procedures were performed, up 2.2% compared with the same quarter last year.

Median waiting times for elective surgery were 11 days for urgent procedures (unchanged), 45 days for semi-urgent procedures (up one day) and 234 days for non-urgent procedures (up nine days).

The report and data are available at bhi.nsw.gov.au