

MEDIA RELEASE

Unseasonal increase in patients to NSW emergency departments

The latest *Hospital Quarterly* report from the Bureau of Health Information shows an unseasonal increase in the number of patients attending NSW emergency departments.

“This is typically the quietest time of the year for emergency departments where we would expect to see a dip in patient activity compared to the previous quarter,” Bureau Acting Chief Executive Kim Browne said.

“However, from April to June there were about 6,000 more emergency department patients than in January to March.”

The total number of patients attending emergency departments for this quarter was 546,000, up 7% on the same quarter last year. There were 7% more patients arriving by ambulance and 6% more admissions to hospital from the emergency department.

The increase in emergency department patients was spread across the more urgent triage categories. There was a 25% increase in patients recorded as triage 2 (*for example, chest pain*) compared to the same quarter last year, and a 13% decrease in less urgent patients (*for example, small cuts*). Over the last year, the proportion of patients who were categorised as triage 2 has increased from 9% to 10%, while the proportion of triage 5 patients has decreased from 15% to 12%.

Despite busier emergency departments, the median times patients waited for treatment were similar to the same quarter last year, except for triage 2 patients who waited one minute longer. The 95th percentile times were slightly longer across all triage categories except for less urgent patients (triage 5), where the time to treatment was eight minutes shorter.

NSW performance against the National Emergency Access Target was 58% during April to June, similar to the same time last year. The target for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave emergency departments within four hours.

Across NSW 92% of elective surgery patients were treated on time, similar to the same quarter last year. About the same amount of elective surgery was completed.

The median waiting time for patients needing urgent surgery was one day less compared to the same time last year. The median waiting time for patients needing semi-urgent surgery increased by one day, and by 17 days for patients needing non-urgent surgery.

SPOKESPERSON: Kim Browne Acting Chief Executive, Bureau of Health Information
MEDIA CONTACT: Karen Perini +61 2 8644 2113 or 0408 472 625