

MEDIA RELEASE

Improved performance in NSW emergency departments

Patients attending NSW emergency departments during the last quarter of 2012 generally waited less time to begin treatment and less time to leave the emergency department, according to the latest *Hospital Quarterly* report.

The report shows there were 3% more patients visiting emergency departments from October to December 2012 than the same time in 2011, with reductions in the times that patients waited for treatment in all triage categories.

Patients classified as *urgent* (triage 3) and *semi-urgent* (triage 4) recorded some of the shortest waiting times for the quarter in five years. *Urgent* and *semi-urgent* patients together comprise more than 75% of all emergency department patients in NSW.

"This quarter the report shows improvement in the time that most patients wait for treatment in NSW emergency departments. As well as beginning treatment more quickly, patients also left the emergency department more quickly than the same time one year ago," Acting Chief Executive of the Bureau of Health Information, Kim Browne said.

The NSW 2012 target for the National Emergency Access Target was 69% of all patients to leave the emergency department within four hours. The percentage of patients who left the emergency department within four hours during this quarter was 64%. The 2012 calendar year total for patients who left NSW emergency departments within four hours was 60%.

"The report shows this quarter's result at 64% is the highest percentage for the year and the biggest improvement on the state's performance in 2011. Overall, however, NSW did not meet the National Emergency Access Target for 2012."

Almost one-quarter of all patients, or 140,362 patients, arrived by ambulance to the emergency department in the October to December quarter. The report shows 64% of these patients were accepted into the care of emergency department staff within 30 minutes of arrival; lower than the 66% one year ago.

During the quarter, more than 52,000 elective surgical procedures were performed in NSW public hospitals, up 4% on the same time one year ago. The majority of patients (93%) received their surgery within the recommended timeframe.

More than 66,400 patients were waiting for elective surgery in NSW at the end of December 2012. At this time, 83% of these patients were classified in the non-urgent category, 15% were in the semi-urgent category, and 1% were waiting for urgent surgery.

Cataract extraction was the most common procedure performed, and the most common procedure that patients were waiting for, with 13,689 patients waiting in NSW at the end of December 2012.

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