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Increased activity and stable performance for NSW emergency departments

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its *Healthcare Quarterly* report showing how public hospitals and ambulance services in NSW performed during the October to December quarter of 2017.

The report shows that 703,410 patients presented to emergency departments, an increase of 2.0% compared with the same quarter in 2016, while the number of patients who arrived by ambulance was up by 3.1% to 151,235.

BHI Chief Executive, Dr Diane Watson, said results across the main performance measures for emergency departments were relatively stable compared with the same quarter a year earlier, despite the increase in patients.

Across NSW:

- Most patients (92.1%) who arrived by ambulance had their care transferred from paramedics to emergency department staff within 30 minutes (up 0.2 percentage points).
- The time from arriving to starting treatment was within clinically recommended time frames for 76.0% of emergency department patients (up 0.3 percentage points).
- Almost three quarters (73.6%) of patients had left the emergency department within four hours of arriving (down 0.8 percentage points).

“NSW is maintaining – and in some cases improving – its performance on these timeliness measures, despite the ongoing increases in activity, with emergency presentations during the October to December quarter up 22.7% over the past five years,” said Dr Watson.

There were more than 284,044 ambulance responses, where a vehicle was dispatched, during the October to December period, which was similar to the same quarter in 2016 (up 0.2%). However, there was an increase of 10.3% (to 5,947) in the number of priority 1A responses.

“Responses classified as priority 1A are the highest priority in the emergency category and considered life-threatening cases, such as those involving cardiac or respiratory arrest,” Dr Watson said.

Paramedics reached 72.1% of priority 1A cases within 10 minutes, up 0.5 percentage points from October to December 2016. The median response time for these highest priority cases in NSW was 7.4 minutes, down from 7.5 minutes during the same quarter last year.

The report shows that 55,872 patients received elective surgery procedures in NSW public hospitals during the October to December period, an increase of 2.0% compared with the same quarter a year earlier.

Almost all (97.5%) surgical procedures were performed within clinically recommended time frames and median waiting times for patients in NSW were 10 days for urgent surgery, 44 days for semi-urgent surgery and 210 days for non-urgent surgery.

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