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Health district praised for meeting growth in demand

The Gold Coast Health Service District had over 10 per cent more patients attend its emergency departments during the March quarter than in the same period last year.

It also treated over 20 per cent more patients on the elective surgery waiting list in the first three months of this year than in the March quarter of 2008.

Acting District Chief Executive Officer Dr John Gerrard said the figures in the latest *Quarterly Public Hospitals Performance Report* confirmed accolades that flowed at recent Queensland Health Awards for Excellence for the district's performance.

"Despite the growing service demand, the Gold Coast's emergency departments and surgery division received a Performance Award for Improvement in Access to Services," Dr Gerrard said.

The services were singled out for excellence in patient treatment times in elective surgery and emergency departments.

Presentations to the emergency departments rose from 24,613 in the March 2008 quarter to 27,120 in the March quarter 2009.

In elective surgery 3191 patients from the elective surgery waiting list were admitted compared with 2650 for the same quarter last year.

Although the results demonstrate improvements, the demand for services continues unabated.

The number of Category 1 elective surgery patients has remained relatively static since 1 January 2009, lifting from 4 patients to 5 patients waiting longer than 30 days on April 1 2009. However, the number of Category 1 patients waiting more than 30 days for surgery has reduced significantly since April last year when there were 58 patients on the list.

The number of people coming to the hospital to be seen by specialist doctors continues to grow with a 14% increase in the services provided in outpatients this quarter compared with the same time last year.

The Gold Coast Health Service District has also been acknowledged for its recent work on identifying and preventing unnecessary pathology tests.

"By reducing the number of these tests, we have been able to treat more patients as well as maintain our high standard of care," Dr Gerrard said.

The initiative has been developed in consultation with key clinicians.

The Gold Coast Health District received an award at the Queensland Health Awards for Excellence, for service delivery in recognition of its contribution to the project to reduce ordering of pathology tests.

Definitions:

Outpatient services provided = the number of outpatient and other non-admitted services minus services such as emergency, pharmacy, pathology, diagnostic imaging, community health services, district nursing services and other outreach services.

People treated as inpatients or emergencies = the number of admitted patient episodes plus the number of emergency services not resulting in admission. For example, some people will attend the Emergency Department and then be admitted to hospital. These people will only be counted once as inpatients and not counted as emergency patients for this particular figure.

People admitted to hospital = the number of admitted patient episodes of care. For example, one person might be admitted to hospital on two separate occasions, they would then be counted as two episodes of care.

People treated in emergency departments = the number of accident and emergency services provided. For example, a patient attends emergency three times, then it is counted as three separate attendances to the emergency department.

People received elective surgery = the number of people admitted for elective surgery from the elective surgery waiting list in either Category 1, 2 or 3.

People waiting for elective surgery = the number of patients waiting for elective surgery from Category 1, 2 or 3 with a status of 'waiting' or 'booked'.

ENDS

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