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Northern Beaches Hospital patient numbers increase by 30 per cent, as waiting times increase too

The number of people going to Northern Beaches Hospital for treatment has soared, latest figures reveal. Doctors are also dealing with more life-threatening emergencies.



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Northern Beaches Hospital is getting busier and dealing with more seriously sick people, according to the latest independent report.

The latest quarterly results show the number of patients arriving at the Emergency Department between January and March this year soared by a third to 23,521.

And, the number of those needing resuscitation, also increased by 33 per cent.

The trend for busier Emergency Department's occurred in 46 out of the 77 large public hospital Emergency Departments in NSW.

In comparison, Royal North Shore Hospital's presentations dropped by 10 per cent with 20,770 people attending its Emergency Department in the first quarter of this year.



A patient in the resuscitation unit at Northern Beaches Hospital who suffered a burst aorta on May 15 and against the odds survived. There were 29 more resuscitations at NBH in the latest published quarter. Picture: Supplied.

However, the figures for Royal North Shore Hospital do not include COVID tests, or if they do the numbers are negligible, according to the Bureau of Health Information.

In contrast, an estimated 6200 people went to Northern Beaches Hospital for COVID tests in that period and those numbers were included in the latest statistics.

Chief executive officer Andrew Newton said Northern Beaches Hospital continued to provide efficient and timely care for patients despite the increase in demand.

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“On average, we are now treating more than 200 people a day in our ED excluding COVID-

19 presentations,” Mr Newton said.

“We also had sicker patients attending our ED in the first quarter of 2021, with the number

of resuscitation cases increasing by 33 per cent (29 more) to 117 attendances. The number

of semi-urgent cases increased by 13 per cent (672 more cases) to 5,581 compared with the same quarter last year.



Northern Beaches Hospital Andrew Newton CEO said they were seeing more patients and sicker patients. Image Matthew Vasilescu

“Despite the increase in pressure, a majority of patients (78.4 per cent) left the ED within four hours of arrival at Northern Beaches Hospital.”

The report reveals that more than 23,500 people attended the Emergency Department at Northern Beaches Hospital between January and March 2021, compared with just over 18,100 in the same period the year before.

While patient numbers shot up, waiting times also increased in all categories except for non-urgent, where people were seen on average quicker than in other hospitals.

Around 77 per cent of emergency cases started their treatment on time at Northern Beaches Hospital, down from 79.7 per cent in the same quarter in 2020.



NBH saw nearly 2,300 people for COVID tests between January and March this year. Nurse Cathy Morris in the hot zone of the clinic performing a test on a patient. Image Matthew Vasilescu

Nearly 70 per cent of urgent patients started treatment on time, down from 75.6 per cent, while 81.6 per cent of semi-urgent patients were seen on time, compared with 83.9 per cent in the 2020 quarter.

However, despite the increase in waiting times, Northern Beaches Hospital performed better on waiting times across all categories compared with similar hospitals in NSW.

Admission numbers followed a similar pattern, with the number of patients being admitted increasing by 8.7 per cent.

In particular, the number of people admitted for mental health issues jumped by 13.3 per cent in that period, up from 300 between January to March 2020, to 340 in the same period in 2021.

However, the length of stay in the mental health ward decreased from 10.6 days on average to 7.9 days.

The number of elective surgeries also increased by just over 13 per cent, with a minimal drop in the number being performed on time, slipping from 100 per cent, to 99 per cent.

But Northern Beaches Hospital still performed better than other similar hospitals by quite some margin, where on average only 78 per cent of elective surgeries performed on time.

The transfer of patients from ambulances to emergency improved with more than 99 per cent transferred within 30 minutes, compared with 84 per cent in similar hospitals.

Northern Beaches Hospital also saw a baby boom, with 503 babies born in that period, compared with 385 in the same period in 2020, up 30 per cent.

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