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Northern Beaches Hospital bucks trend, seeing increase in patients during COVID

While most hospitals in NSW saw a drop in patients during COVID-19, Northern Beaches Hospital, saw a sharp increase.

Julie Cross, Manly Daily

Subscriber only | September 16, 2020 12:00am

Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest. (AAP IMAGE)

Although the latest health figures show people going to emergency departments dropped across NSW due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Northern Beaches Hospital bucked the trend seeing 10,000 more patients than in the same quarter last year.

The number of people going to emergency at the Frenchs Forest hospital increased by 66 per cent from April to June, according to the figures from the Bureau of Health Information.

Nearly 26,000 people went through the department, up from 15,658 in the same quarter last year.

Many of those were for COVID-19 tests.

Northern Beaches Hospital is undertaking a huge number of COVID tests. Image Matthew Vasilescu

However, staff also saw more seriously sick patients, with 23 more resuscitations undertaken than in the same period in 2019.

The next most serious category of patients also saw an increase in numbers, but the time it took to treat patients was quicker than last year.

It comes as the hospital revealed its own figures show the number of patients have continued to increase since June, right through to August.

Hospital chief executive officer Andrew Newton told the *Manly Daily* last week that the current numbers they were seeing were now widely accepted by staff as "the new normal".

He said despite that Northern Beaches Hospital continues to perform exceptionally well.

"The hospital saw almost 26,000 emergency department attendances, which was a 65.9 per cent increase compared to this time last year. This was particularly driven by a large increase in patients requiring non-urgent treatment, such as those presenting for a COVID-19 test.

"We also treated many more very ill patients with resuscitation cases increasing by 32.4 per cent, up to 94 patients, and emergency cases increasing by 4.9 per cent, up to 3003 patients.

"The communities of the northern beaches can have real confidence in their local hospital to provide timely and efficient healthcare close to their home."

Northern Beaches Hospital Andrew Newton CEO. Andrew photographed today 18th August 2020 outside the new hospital. Image Matthew Vasilescu

Mr Newton said Northern Beaches Hospital performed above peer group average in all categories of care.

"During this quarter, our timeliness of care continued to improve for all patients with 92 per cent of patients seen within the specified time frame," Mr Newton said.

More than 99 per cent of people were also transferred from ambulance to hospital in under 30 minutes with an average of 8 minutes to transfer care.

"This helps to put paramedics and ambulances back on the road for other patients," he said.

"These great achievements are a credit to the staff in the emergency department and throughout the hospital."

Mr Newton added the hospital only performed 41 fewer elective surgeries despite the

cessation of elective surgery due to COVID-19.

"While the waiting list did increase by 290 people, the hospital has worked hard since

the resumption of surgery. We expect to see improvements in the waiting list next

quarter," Mr Newton said.

The hospital's maternity unit delivered 384 babies between April and June – an increase of 5.5 per cent on the same time last year.