What is the Whole of Health Program?

The Whole of Health Program (WOHP) is a centrally facilitated but locally led Program which aims to improve access to care for patients across NSW. It began as the Whole of Hospital Program in February 2013 to drive the local change needed in order to improve patient delays, with NSW having fallen short of the 4 hour Emergency Department (ED) target (previously National Emergency Access Target or NEAT) in 2011 and 2012.

Prolonged stays in the ED result in overcrowding, delayed ambulance access, reduced patient/carer satisfaction and increased adverse outcomes for admitted patients. Research also shows that there is a link between performance against the 4 hour target and in-hospital mortality for admitted patients.

The Program work recognises that in order to reduce delays, it requires a ‘whole of hospital’ approach to streamlining systems, people and processes across the whole care continuum. With ever increasing numbers of emergency department presentations, smooth patient flow and ease of access become more and more critical, in order to ensure there are hospital beds available for those who need them most.

Despite no longer being a Commonwealth target, NSW remains committed to improving access to care and, having already seen significant improvement using the 4 hour target as a driver for change, will continue with an equivalent measure. Improving service levels in hospitals and specifically, the 4 hour target, is also a NSW Premier’s priority until 2019. The expectation for the re-named ‘Emergency Treatment Performance’ target for 2016/17 is that 81% of all patients presenting to a public hospital ED will either physically leave the ED for admission to hospital, be referred to another hospital for treatment or be discharged home within four hours. It is sometimes clinically appropriate for patients to remain in the ED for more than 4 hours and these decisions remain at the discretion of the clinicians.

The Whole of Health Program will continue to work with its partners to facilitate patient flow improvement initiatives across all Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Specialty Health Networks (SHNs). The Whole of Health Program works directly with targeted metropolitan and rural hospitals, while sharing knowledge and experience gathered across the sector.

Whole of Hospital to Whole of Health

The Whole of Hospital Program transitioned in 2015 from a ‘whole of hospital’ to a ‘whole of health’ approach that takes into account not only what happens within our hospitals but also the impact that hospital avoidance and post discharge care programs, such as Hospital in the Home or chronic disease management programs, offer in improving access to timely care in the right place for patients. This is also where integrated care becomes critical to keeping people well in the community and avoiding unplanned hospitalisations.
Partnerships are being expanded to support this work, including with the Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol Office, Centre for Aboriginal Health, Aged Care Unit, Health System Planning and Investment, Workforce, Health System Information and Performance Reporting and Integrated Care branches of the Ministry of Health, the Emergency Care Institute, Pillars, NSW Ambulance, Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT) and the Primary Care sector to streamline and promote successful models of care that reduce demand for acute hospital attendances and admissions.

Subject matter experts have joined the WOHP team to provide central support to LHDs in areas with opportunities for improvement and lead projects in the following areas: Mental Health Emergency Access, Ambulance, Aboriginal Patient Flow and various demand management related projects e.g. Guardianship and Demand Escalation.

The key WOHP communication messages are depicted on the below diagram:

**Communication is KEY**

- Working together to provide the right healthcare for all communities in NSW every day
- Leadership and collaboration in health service design to create a sustainable health system
- We value consumers’ experience & input
- We value the involvement of all health professionals
- We all have our part to play
- Improving partnerships and connectivity to create a seamless care experience
- Development of local skills and capacity for system change

**What’s in it for patients?**

Prior to the commencement of the WOHP, only 6 out of 10 people had their treatment completed in the ED in less than 4 hours. Now, approximately three quarters of all patients and seen, treated and either admitted, discharged or transferred to another hospital within the 4 hour benchmark.
In terms of actual numbers of patients benefitting from these improvements, despite increasing ED attendances, more than 850,000 additional patients have had their treatment completed in the ED within 4 hours since implementation of the target and the Whole of Health Program.

NSW performance against the elective surgery targets have not been compromised over the same timeframe and have remained among the highest in the country. There is also a strong focus on care coordination, discharge planning and ongoing monitoring of quality and safety measures.

While there is still room for continued improvement, we have set a strong platform of change that we can build upon. This is testament to the fantastic work NSW Health clinicians and managers have been doing across the state to streamline processes, thereby improving the patient journey.

What are the WOHP strategies?

- Provision of on-site support via the WOHP team to assist with diagnostic studies, solution development and implementation of patient flow improvement strategies.

- Provision of part funding for WOHP Program Leads for all districts, to have designated time to drive local change improvement

- Connecting the NSW sector via interagency partnerships to highlight successful initiatives and share models of care aimed at enhancing patient flow and access. These include but are not limited to the MOH lead state-wide 90 Day Challenge- Improving the patient journey from Hospital to Home, a collaborative partnership with the Agency for Clinical Innovation’s Criteria Led Discharge Program and the Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC), In Safe Hands Program, the LHD/SHNs and the Behavioural Insights Unit, DPC.
An established Whole of Health website, bringing together available tools, resources and program contacts in one place in order to assist LHD staff. This includes directing staff towards existing tools such as the Patient Flow Portal and Electronic Journey Boards, which have their own support structures.

Sharing lessons learned, knowledge and experience across the system in order to develop local capability and ensure sustainability. Specific capability building activities include state-wide Master Classes, winter planning forums, Improving Access to Care teleconferences (also rural specific teleconferences) as well as the WOHP Newsletter.

Setting Emergency Treatment Performance trajectories for all LHDs and SHNs in order to maintain focus and momentum, as well as to allow mapping the path towards the 81% target at a state level.

Encouraging facilities to appoint local Clinical Champions in order to drive change.

Distribution of the WOHP weekly snapshot (state-wide data dashboard) as part of the communication strategy to allow benchmarking against peer facilities, monitor a series of quality and safety indicators and monitor trends against state-wide strategies. This now includes Mental Health and Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT) Data.

Medical engagement: As part of the WOHP, NSW has invested in the Medical Engagement Scale (MES) tool which has been used in the UK’s National Health Service. Research has shown that medical engagement is one of the key factors to influence organisational performance. WOHP will continue to work with Clinicians to identify the emerging leaders of the future who can drive local engagement and a shared understanding of accountability for quality improvement and operational flow.

What are the 2016 Whole of Health Focus areas?

The Whole of Health Program is leveraging the framework now in place, continuing to build on the work and the networks that have been effective over the last 3 years. In addition to these strategies, specific focus areas in 2016 will include partnerships to support the sector on:

- Intensive support for targeted facilities with high demand
- 90 Day Challenge – Improving the patient journey from Hospital to Home, 1st and 2nd Tranche
- Implementing a standardised Framework for Demand Escalation
- Streamlining Mental Health Access to Care, Aged Care and Out of Hospital Care
- Continued development and implementation of the Patient Flow Portal and Electronic Patient Journey Boards
- NSW Integrated Care Strategy ($120 million has been invested in the following up to the end of 2016/17)
  o Three Demonstrator sites in Central Coast, Western Sydney and Western NSW LHDs
  o 17 Innovator sites in LHDs and SHNs not funded as Demonstrators
  o State-wide enablers including risk stratification, patient reported outcome and experience measures, monitoring and evaluation, and e-enablement.
  o Integrated Care for People with Chronic Conditions
- Clinical management focus on Medical leadership and organisational improvement
- Demand management focus on Guardianship, Demand Escalation and an Out of Hospital Services Review
- Aboriginal patient flow partnership with Centre for Aboriginal Health
- Research projects – Utilisation of Ambulance and Emergency, Readmissions
- Evaluation of the Whole of Health Program

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