

Media Release

May 14, 2019

Emergency Alternatives campaign launched on the Gold Coast

With winter the peak season for hospital admissions only two weeks away, Gold Coasters are being asked to consider other options for medical care, instead of going to public hospital emergency departments.

Gold Coast Primary Health Network and Gold Coast Health have launched the annual, Emergency Alternatives campaign, to try to reduce the number of non-urgent presentations to emergency departments.

Gold Coast Primary Health Network CEO Matt Carrodus said residents often didn't realise that there were other options available.

"Emergency departments are as their name suggests, for those patients that need urgent medical care. Because hospitals have to prioritise patients in order of highest need, patients with minor ailments could end up waiting a long time for treatment.

"There are a range of other options including seeing a GP or using an after-hours medical service such as an extended hours GP clinic or contacting a home visiting doctor if required," Mr Carrodus said.

Gold Coast General Practice Liaison Officer and GP, Dr Carl de Wet, said GPs are generally the first port of call for patients in the Australian healthcare system. GPs have the knowledge and skills to manage a wide range of medical conditions, including infections and minor injuries.

"Residents can visit www.healthemergencyoptions.com.au for more information about their options," Dr de Wet said.

"If people feel unsure of where they need to go for help for themselves or their family, they can check symptoms online at www.healthdirect.gov.au/sympton-checker or seek advice from a registered nurse by calling 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84). Mental Health services are available at 1300 MH CALL (1300 642 255). The services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Dr de Wet said.

Last year, the emergency departments of Gold Coast University Hospital and Robina Hospital treated more than 173,000 people.

The Gold Coast University Hospital, which includes a dedicated children's emergency department is the busiest emergency department in Australia.

Director of Emergency Services Dr David Green said there is still a number of people presenting at emergency departments for non-life-threatening conditions.

“All presentations to Gold Coast emergency departments are assessed in a triage system with the sickest patients receiving priority treatment,” said Dr Green.

“Timely and quality care remain the objectives of our hard-working emergency doctors and nurses, however we understand it can be frustrating for people to wait for treatment.”

Some of the non-urgent presentations at Gold Coast emergency departments, that could have been more efficiently handled by a GP or pharmacist included requests for prescriptions or medical certificates, sprains and strains and ingrown toenails.

For more information contact:

Gold Coast Primary Health Network Communications Team, 5635 2455

Gold Coast Health Media Team, 5687 7484

Gold Coast Health News Online

www.health.qld.gov.au/goldcoasthealth