

Media Release



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District



SYDNEY NORTH
Primary Health Network

August 31, 2017

KEEP THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT FOR EMERGENCIES

A new joint campaign to assist the community with decision-making and remind them to keep hospital emergency departments for emergencies has been launched by the Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) and the Sydney North Primary Health Network (SNPHN).

Each year, the five hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) in NSLHD see more than 200,000 patients – many of whom could have been treated in the community, either by their family GP, at their local medical centre, or through a GP home visit service.

In response, NSLHD and SNPHN have joined forces to highlight the important role GPs can play in dealing with many medical issues which do not need attention in a busy hospital emergency department ED.

A key component of the campaign is a new video featuring the deputy director of Royal North Shore Hospital's ED, Dr Liz Swinburn, and Sydney North Primary Health Network chair Dr Magdalen Campbell. The video message is delivered in Mandarin and Korean as well as English.

Dr Swinburn said the instinct to rush to the ED was a powerful one, but urged people to stop and think about the best place to get treatment.

"When you or someone you love is sick or in pain it's only natural you want to get help quickly," Dr Swinburn said.

"If you're in too much pain, or if you're not sure if the situation is life-threatening, you should come to the ED or call Triple Zero straight away.

"But if the illness or injury isn't an emergency then the hospital's ED isn't the best place to go.

"In the ED, as you would expect, we see the most serious cases first, so if your case is not an emergency you could experience a longer waiting time than you were anticipating."

"At these times, your after-hours GP or medical centre is a much better option."

Dr Campbell encouraged people to be prepared and check their family doctor's after-hours arrangements at their next visit.

"Lots of GPs and medical centres now have longer opening hours and these should be your first stop when you are sick or injured," Dr Campbell said.

If you need advice, Healthdirect Australia (1800 022 222) offers a 24 hour hotline staffed by registered nurses; and the National Home Doctor Service (137425) and the Home GP Service (1300 466 347) offer home visits after hours.

"The Emergency Department is your best option if you experience a serious injury or illness, breathing problems, or need urgent medical attention, however for everything else, visit your local GP, medical centre, pharmacist or pick up the phone," Dr Campbell said.

Northern Sydney Local Health District includes hospital emergency departments at Royal North Shore (around 84,000 ED presentations each year), Ryde (27,000), Hornsby (39,000), Manly (25,000) and Mona Vale (35,000) hospitals. Sydney North Primary Health Network is one of 31 across the nation established by the Australian Government to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community.

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