

31 May, 2016

Save our Emergency Department for real emergencies

Every day the St George Hospital emergency department sees patients who could receive treatment by visiting their GP or another appropriate medical service. This may be people with conditions such as vomiting, coughs and colds, sore throat and headaches,

Dr Peter Grant, senior staff specialist, emergency department, St George Hospital, said emergency departments were for people with real emergencies.

“There are many alternatives to seeking treatment in the emergency department and going directly to an appropriate practitioner can help you to a quicker recovery, improved follow up, and better continuity of care. This also helps free up St George Hospital services to run as efficiently as possible,” Dr Grant said.

“St George Hospital is a major trauma centre and has one of the busiest emergency departments in New South Wales. At peak times, especially over holiday periods, the emergency department workload can be very high. We need to make sure that we are able to see people quickly if they need emergency care.

“Members of the public have always recognised that the emergency department is for those with genuine emergencies, however, they are not always aware of what alternatives are available, especially when their own GP is closed.

“It’s important for people to have their own GP. Having your own GP will be of benefit to you and will provide expert health care. A GP has a general knowledge about a range of different medical problems,” Dr Grant said.

When the local GP is closed, people can seek treatment at an after-hours GP service and an increasing number of General Practices and Medical Centres are offering after-hours services.

There are other services available, some who bulk bill, such as the National Home Doctor Service (13 7425) and Home GP (1300 466 347), who provide home visits weeknights, weekends and public holidays.

Health advice is also available at the 24-hour free hotline on 1800 022 222 (*Healthdirect* Australia), which is manned by a registered nurse.

The local pharmacist can also provide a whole range of services including advice, support and guidance on your health problems, as well as help with your medicines.

“It’s important to stress that people who are experiencing heart and breathing problems or who feel they need urgent medical attention should always attend their closest emergency department or call 000,” Dr Grant said.

For more information go to: <http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/SGH/>

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