



# Quarterly Report: HealthDirect

## January - March 2008

### Introduction

HealthDirect commenced in 1999 to provide telephone advice on the urgency of an individual's need for health care. In July 2007, HealthDirect became part of the National Health Call Centre Network (NHCCN), a nationwide system operating from a single telephone number, and is now known as *healthdirect* Australia. The WA telephone number of 1800 022 222 is used for the nationwide network.

### Activity

The figure below shows the number of calls received by *healthdirect* since January 2007. After a peak in July 2007, due to the paediatric influenza deaths, the last quarter saw a similar activity trend as 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2007.

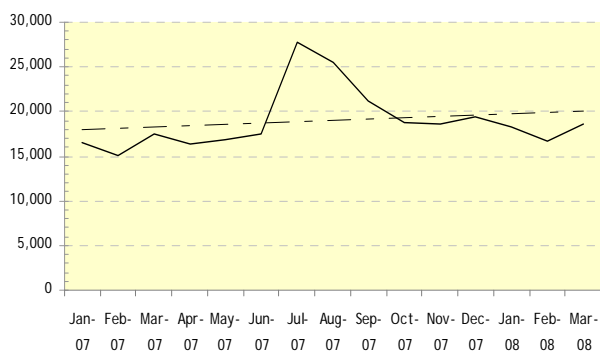


Figure 1: Calls to HealthDirect for combined triage and information services

### Top 10 Guidelines used

Table 1 shows the top 10 guidelines used on adults and children by *healthdirect* in descending order.

Table 1: Top 10 guidelines used by *healthdirect*

Adults	Children
1. Abdominal pain	1. Fever
2. Bites and stings	2. Vomiting
3. Abortion < 20 weeks	3. Rashes, widespread
4. Medication questions	4. Trauma-Head
5. Post-operative problems	5. Diarrhoea
6. Nausea/vomiting	6. Colds
7. Headache	7. Bites and stings
8. Rash/hives/eruptions	8. Immunisation reactions
9. Abrasions/lacerations/bites	9. Cough
10. Diarrhoea/change in bowel	10. Rashes, localised

Callers that are referred to the ambulance service for urgent medical transport are assigned a 000 disposition. Table 2 shows the top 10 guidelines (in descending order) that were used for 000 dispositions over this quarter.

Table 2: Top 10 guidelines used by 000

1. Chest pain < 8 hours
2. Abdominal pain/discomfort
3. Dizziness/vertigo
4. Suicidal and/or homicidal behaviour
5. Gastro-intestinal bleeding
6. Allergic reaction severe (known/suspected)
7. Breathing problems
8. Head injury
9. Nausea/vomiting
10. Bites and stings-Insects/Spiders

### Health Call Centre services

The Health Call Centre (HCC) carries out a range of telephone services to support the community. The following reports outline the activities in the main programs.

### Health Information Line

The Health Information Line (HealthInfo) provides information on the range and location of health services available to the community, as well as access to printed material on health issues.

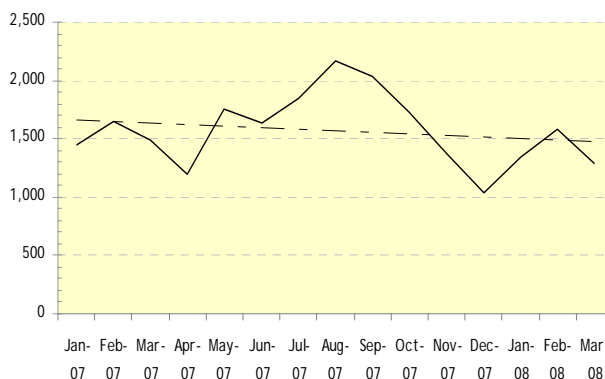


Figure 2: Calls to the Health Information Line

The number of calls dipped during the holiday period in December 2007 but picked up again in February 2008.



## Residential Care Line

The Residential Care Line (RCL) receives calls from nursing homes. Nurses with special training in caring for people in residential settings answer the calls, with the aim of assisting and treating people in their place of residence (nursing home) rather than having them sent to an Emergency Department (ED) facility. The number of calls to the RCL service increased in January 2008. This may be attributed to an increased awareness of RCL as a result of the new RCL Steering Committee. GP and support staff annual leave must also be factored in.

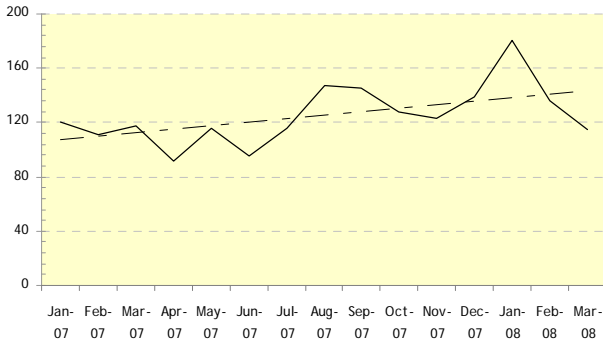


Figure 3: Calls to the Residential Care Line

## Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Line

The Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) line provides advice to people about how to handle possible exposure to HIV. The number of calls to this line was too low to draw inferences, but there have been no systematic increases or decreases in activity.

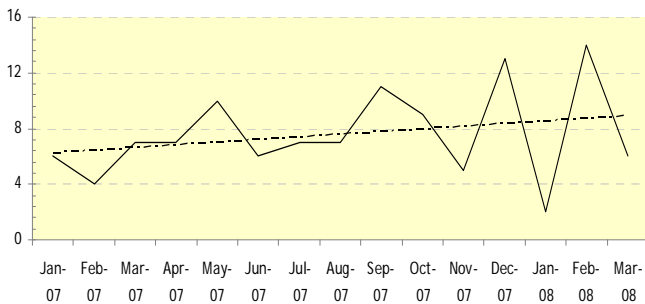


Figure 4: Calls to the Post Exposure Prophylaxis Line

## Secondary Triage

The HCC provides secondary triage for people who have called an ambulance on the 000 number but do not have a life-threatening health condition. Rather than travelling to a hospital by ambulance, these people are offered advice on the urgency of their need for health care. Where appropriate, they can then be safely referred to their local GP rather than needing to go to an ED facility. The number of calls to

this line peaked in July 2007 at the time of the Perth outbreak of paediatric influenza and has continued to increase since then.

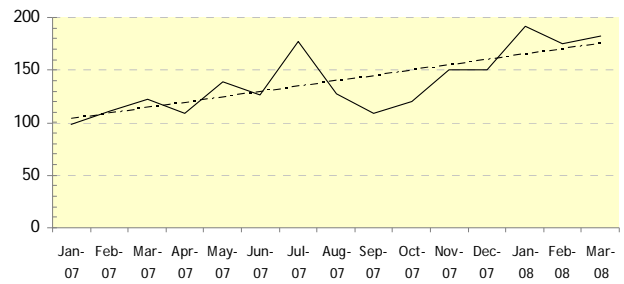


Figure 5: Calls for Secondary Triage