



Quarterly Report: HealthDirect

April - June 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 April 2007. After a peak in July 2007, due to the paediatric influenza deaths, the last quarter saw a slight increase of approximately 6.2% of activity compared to the 2nd quarter in 2007.

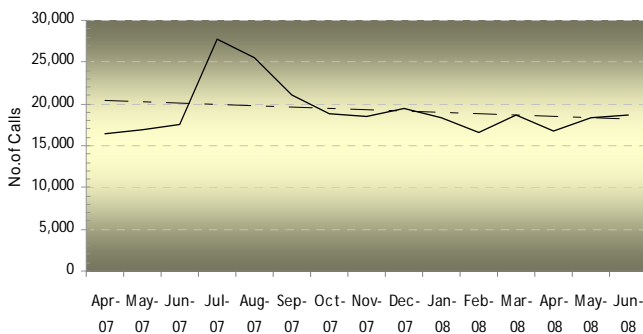


Figure 1: Calls to *healthdirect* Australia for combined triage and information services

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

1. Medication Question Encounters Adult
2. Abdominal Pain/Discomfort
3. Chest Pain/Discomfort
4. Postoperative Problems
5. Headache
6. Nausea/Vomiting
7. Abortion <20 Wks-Threatened/Spontaneous
8. Back Symptoms-Upper/Lower

9. Rash/Hives/Eruptions
10. Dizziness/Vertigo

Children

1. Vomiting
2. Fever
3. Colds
4. Cough
5. Trauma-Head
6. Diarrhoea
7. Rashes, Widespread, Cause Unknown
8. Croup
9. Immunisation Reactions
10. Constipation

A 000 disposition indicates a caller has been referred to the ambulance service for urgent medical transport. Table 2 shows the top 10 guidelines that have sent callers to 000.

Table 2: Top 10 guidelines providing a 000 disposition

1. Chest Pain/Discomfort
2. Dizziness/Vertigo
3. Breathing Problems
4. GI Bleeding
5. Abdominal Pain/Discomfort
6. Allergic Reaction Severe; Known/Suspected
7. Head Injury
8. Nausea/Vomiting
9. Neurological Symptoms/TIA
10. Confusion/Disorientation/Agitation

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.

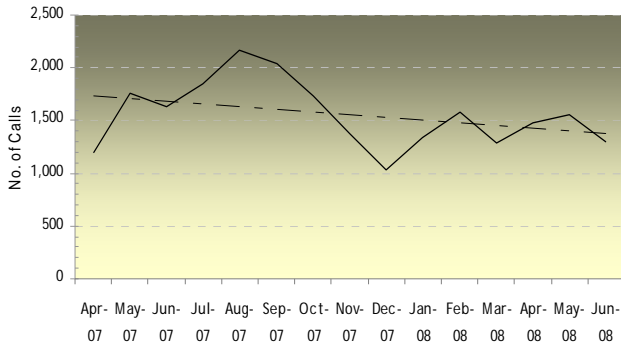


Figure 2: Calls to the Health Information Line

The number of calls dipped during the holiday period in December 2007 but picked up again in February 2008. The last quarter saw a decreased of activity by approximately 5.6% compared to the 2nd quarter in 2007.

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 saw an increased in January 2008. This was due to the increased awareness of RCL by the new RCL Steering Committee with representations from nursing home peak bodies. The last quarter saw an increase of approximately 15.5% of activity compared to the 2nd quarter in 2007.

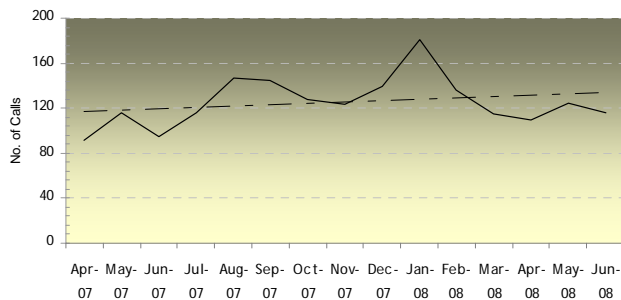


Figure 3: Calls to the Residential Care Line

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.

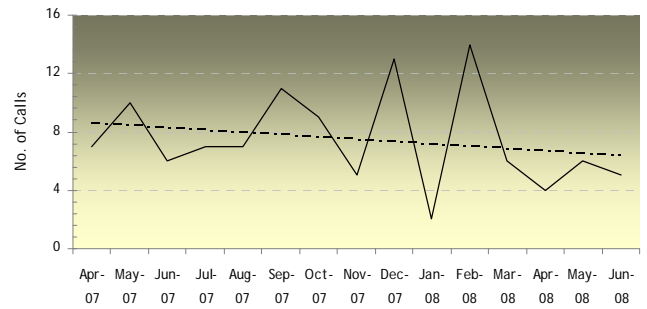


Figure 4: Calls to the Post Exposure Prophylaxis Line

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 GPs rather than needing to go to an ED facility. The last quarter saw an increased of approximately 113% of activity compared to the 2nd quarter in 2007. This was largely due to a recent trial aimed at increasing referrals of non-urgent SJA calls to the WA Health Call Centre's *healthdirect* Australia nurse triage service in June 2008.

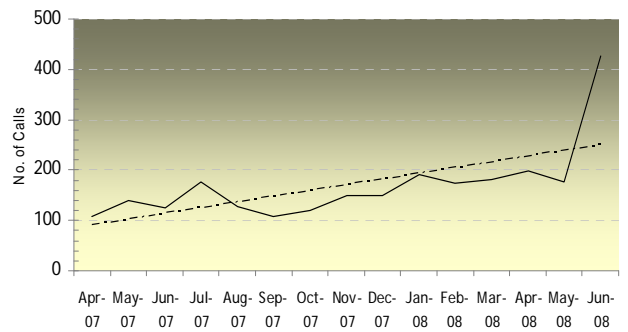


Figure 5: Calls for Secondary Triage