



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

REFERRALS TO PUBLIC OUTPATIENT SURGICAL CLINICS

December 2015



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AT A GLANCE*

- Fiona Stanley Hospital is now fully operational. From July 2015 Fremantle Hospital ceased being a tertiary hospital and was re-designated as a metropolitan general hospital. For this reason Fremantle Hospital's outpatient surgical activity is not included in the report from July 2015 onwards. Care needs to be taken in comparing the overall activity between December 2014 and December 2015.
- As at the end of December 2015, there were 66,665 referrals waiting to be seen at surgical outpatient clinics for a first appointment (for further details see pages 5 and 6).
- The number of patients waiting for a referral appointment decreased by 4.1% between December 2014 and December 2015. The overall median wait time increased from 5.75 months to 6.21 months and is slightly higher than the six month target set by Government (for further details, see Section 2).
- The median waiting time for those patients who have had their first appointment has remained at 0.56 months in December 2015, the same as December 2014.
- Of the 344,128 total appointments for the 2015 calendar year, only 7.4% resulted in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list, and a further 4.1% were reported with an unknown outcome (see page 11 for details).

* Note limitations of the outpatient data as detailed on page iii.

Abbreviations

FH	Fremantle Hospital
FSH	Fiona Stanley Hospital
GP	General Practitioner
KEMH	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women
MATES	Measurement of Access Time to Elective Surgery
NA	Not Available
NAPAAWL DC	Non-Admitted Patient Activity and Wait List Data Collection
PMH	Princess Margaret Hospital for Children
RPH	Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus
SCGH	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
TOPAS	The Open Patient Administration System
WA	Western Australia
webPAS	Web-based Patient Administration System
YTD	Year to Date

Notes: Report and Data Limitations

The data source is the Non Admitted Patient Activity and Wait List Data Collection (NAPAAWL DC), which uses data from TOPAS (The Open Patient Administration System) and webPAS (Web-based Patient Administration System) for this report. The key issues associated with the NAPAAWL DC that need to be taken into consideration when assessing reports based on it are:

- The NAPAAWL Data Collection is a new data collection being developed. The data provided are currently undergoing validation and caution is advised when using and interpreting data from this data collection.
- Due to there being no method to indicate otherwise, all outpatients are notionally considered ready for care or assessment on the basis that a referral has been initiated.
- The Non admitted Patient Administration Systems in use by WA Health do not currently differentiate between days that the patient is ready for care and days when they are not ready for care. Therefore the days waiting continue to accrue during such periods, and counts of days waiting for patients who have a period when they are not ready for care will also include those days.
- Non admitted data are collected based on clinic information and not clinician specialty or patient diagnosis. Therefore the data are provided based on and by clinic details and not by clinician or patient information.
- The data reported are limited to referrals that are considered surgical. The methodology for identifying patients awaiting appointments that precede their addition to surgical waiting lists is still under development, and hence the list of surgical referrals may require change in future reporting. This expansion is likely to lead to increased median waiting times.
- Not all patients that are referred to Surgical Outpatient Clinics will be placed on the Elective Surgery Waitlist.
- Referrals are determined based on the data as received from sites. Varying work practices and quality may affect the accuracy of reported figures. This may particularly apply to data in respect of patients recorded as still waiting for their appointment when these patients have had an appointment but the record has not been updated in a timely manner, and as such days waiting have continued to accrue.
- Variations for data published in previous reports are likely to occur as the outpatient databases are continuously updated. Variations may occur for a number of reasons, such as updates to procedure codes, lags in data processing or other types of errors detected after publication. There is ongoing revision of the data from June 2007 to the current month; therefore the most recent edition of a report should always be consulted, as data are not revised in previously published editions.
- Effective December 2013, referrals identified for long term management of patients and Princess Margaret Hospital Dermatology clinics, are excluded from this report.
- Data for Fiona Stanley Hospital is shown prior to the opening of this hospital due to transferred patients retaining their original date of referral. This ensures wait times are reported accurately.
- The significant decrease in referrals to Fremantle Hospital is due to the reconfiguration of the South Metropolitan Health Service, with referrals transferred mainly to Fiona Stanley Hospital.

- Note there is no data for Fremantle Hospital from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a metropolitan general hospital after Fiona Stanley Hospital has become fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

Glossary

Median: This refers to the value separating the higher half of a sample, a population, or a probability distribution, from the lower half. This statistic is used in preference to the mean when the distribution of the valued is skewed by a small number of outlier values. Outliers can arise where patients:

- are not ready for care, and because “days not ready for care” is not yet part of the data collected, the days waiting continue to accrue during such periods, or
- patients have had an appointment but the record has not been updated in a timely manner, and as such days waiting have continued to accrue.

Median waiting time: Median waiting time is calculated from the date the referral is received by the hospital to the date that the first appointment is attended.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Information on referrals to public outpatient surgical clinics

WA Health aims to efficiently provide specialist outpatient services in a coordinated, streamlined and standardised approach. Outpatient surgical appointments are made for referrals received from:

- general practitioners (GPs) and other external referrers
- medical practitioners within the hospital (e.g. Emergency Department and inpatient units)
- medical practitioners within the hospital 'referring' to self for patients that require long term follow-up or continued management, i.e. more than 1 year (Ongoing Management)
- medical practitioners in other public or private hospitals
- other health care professionals (e.g. optometrist to ophthalmologist).

To ensure patients receive the most appropriate care within the desired timeframe, referring practitioners allocate a priority for care based on the level of urgency.

1.2 Information in this report

This report provides details of the waiting time for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals. This information forms part of the Government's commitment to improve access to surgery and outpatient services. The Government has sought to ensure that the time from original identification of a problem to an outpatient pre-surgery appointment will be no more than six months.¹ This target is nominal and does not relate to a National target as a National target does not exist.

The referrals within this report relate to patients seen or waiting to be seen in outpatient clinics within the public health system only. The scope of this report is metropolitan tertiary hospitals: Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. Fremantle Hospital is now designated a metropolitan general hospital, please refer to the notes section for further details.

Patients with referrals for a metropolitan outpatient surgical assessment are not classified as being on the elective surgery waiting list. Following the outpatient surgical assessment, patients may be placed on the elective surgery waiting list if deemed appropriate.

The methodology for identification of patients on surgical waiting lists is still subject to refinement, and may be influenced by development work that is occurring through a national working group with jurisdictional representatives. This development work comprises a national work plan funded by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council. The work plan is being progressed by the Measurement of Access Time to Elective Surgery (MATES) Working Group, which is working towards developing a national measure of surgical access time from GP referral to surgical care. This measure is intended to reflect the actual waiting time for patients and the demand for elective surgery.

¹ Liberal Plan for Better Health Services, page 9

The development work has identified three stages of waiting for surgery:

- Stage 1: Initial referral for assessment to the first consultation (first appointment) with a surgeon
- Stage 2: First consultation with a surgeon to the 'decision to treat' (i.e. to operate)
- Stage 3: Decision to operate to undergoing the surgical procedure.

Data in this report relates to stages 1 and 2. Because the patient pathways in stage 2 can vary markedly, can involve multiple appointments and, on occasion, deferral of the decision to operate, relatively few appointments have the outcome of "placed on the elective surgery waiting list".

Data is preliminary and subject to change as methodologies for measuring the waiting times are refined.

Please note the limitations of the outpatient data used within this report as detailed on page iii.

2. Referrals waiting to be seen

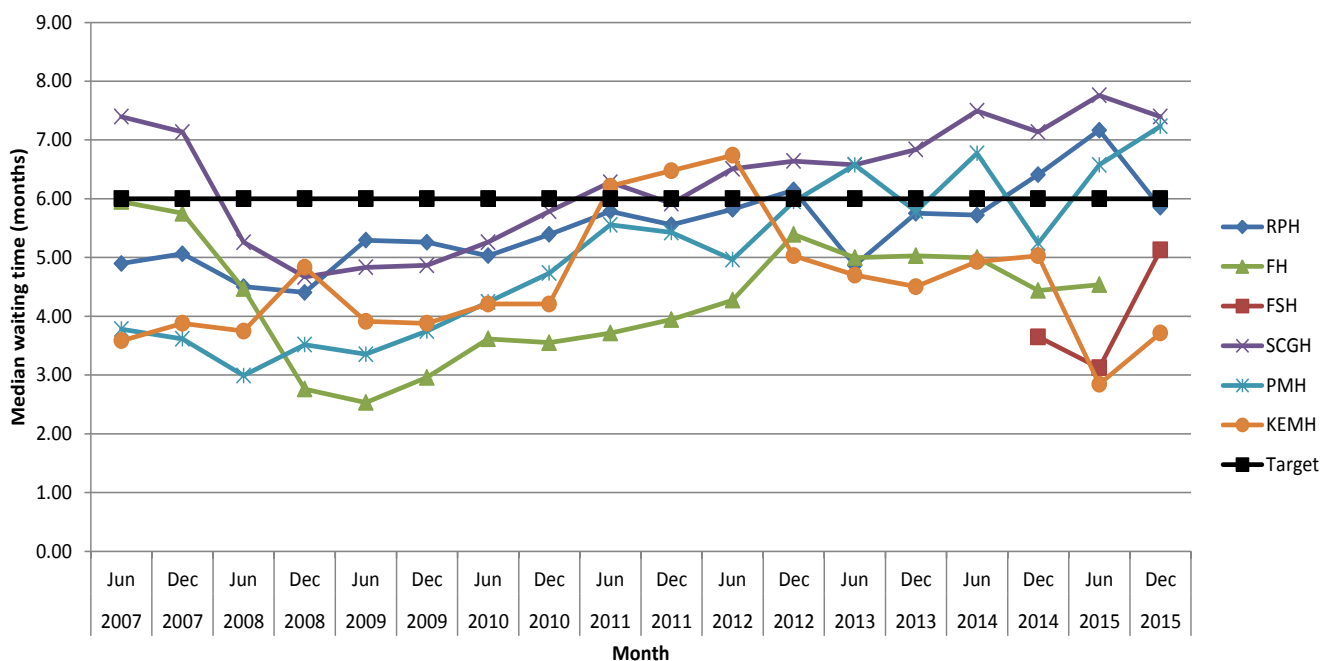
2.1 Waiting time (in months) for referrals²

Figure 1 and Table 1 display the median waiting time (in months) of referrals that are yet to have a first appointment. This is the median waiting time from the point of referral (e.g. GP) to the end of the reporting month. The nominal target is for the referral to be seen within six months.

At the end of December 2015, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 6.21 months, which is an increase of 0.46 months (8.0%) when compared with the median waiting time in December 2014, and an increase of 0.72 months compared with June 2007. Although this measure had decreased to 3.95 months by December 2008, the figure rose steadily, again peaking in June 2014 at 6.21 months and is now steady.

For referrals that are yet to have a first appointment at Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus, the median waiting time was more than six months in December 2012, December 2014 and June 2015. For referrals that are yet to have a first appointment at Princess Margaret Hospital, the median waiting time was more than six months in June 2013, June 2014, June 2015 and December 2015. The median waiting time for referrals that are yet to have a first appointment at King Edward Memorial Hospital exceeded six months in June 2011, December 2011 and June 2012. Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital had a median waiting time for referrals that are yet to have a first appointment longer than six months for eleven out of the eighteen months reported.

Figure 1: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment



² Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a metropolitan general hospital as Fiona Stanley Hospital has become fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

Table 1: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment³

End of month	Adult Tertiary Hospitals					Princess Margaret Hospital for Children	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Transfers to Fiona Stanley Hospital from other Tertiary Hospitals	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	4.90	5.95	-	26.45	7.40	3.78	3.58	5.49
December 2007	5.06	5.75	-	32.50	7.13	3.62	3.88	5.46
June 2008	4.50	4.47	-	30.38	5.26	2.99	3.75	4.34
December 2008	4.41	2.76	-	8.83	4.67	3.52	4.83	3.95
June 2009	5.29	2.53	-	11.56	4.83	3.35	3.91	4.08
December 2009	5.26	2.96	-	14.76	4.87	3.75	3.88	4.11
June 2010	5.03	3.62	-	14.50	5.26	4.24	4.21	4.44
December 2010	5.39	3.55	-	16.14	5.79	4.73	4.21	4.83
June 2011	5.79	3.72	-	18.71	6.28	5.56	6.21	5.16
December 2011	5.56	3.95	-	11.64	5.92	5.42	6.48	5.23
June 2012	5.82	4.27	-	7.04	6.51	4.96	6.74	5.46
December 2012	6.15	5.39	-	8.45	6.64	5.95	5.03	6.08
June 2013	4.87	5.00	-	6.92	6.58	6.58	4.70	5.65
December 2013	5.75	5.03	-	3.73	6.84	5.79	4.50	5.88
June 2014	5.72	5.00	-	3.85	7.50	6.77	4.93	6.21
December 2014	6.41	4.44	3.65	-	7.13	5.24	5.03	5.75
June 2015	7.17	4.54	3.12	-	7.76	6.58	2.84	5.69
December 2015	5.85	-	5.13	-	7.40	7.23	3.72	6.21

³ Fiona Stanley Hospital has accepted referrals from other hospitals that have referral dates prior to Fiona Stanley Hospital opening. As the data and calculations are based on date of referral, a separate column 'Transfers to Fiona Stanley Hospital from other Tertiary Hospitals' has the historical perspective included.

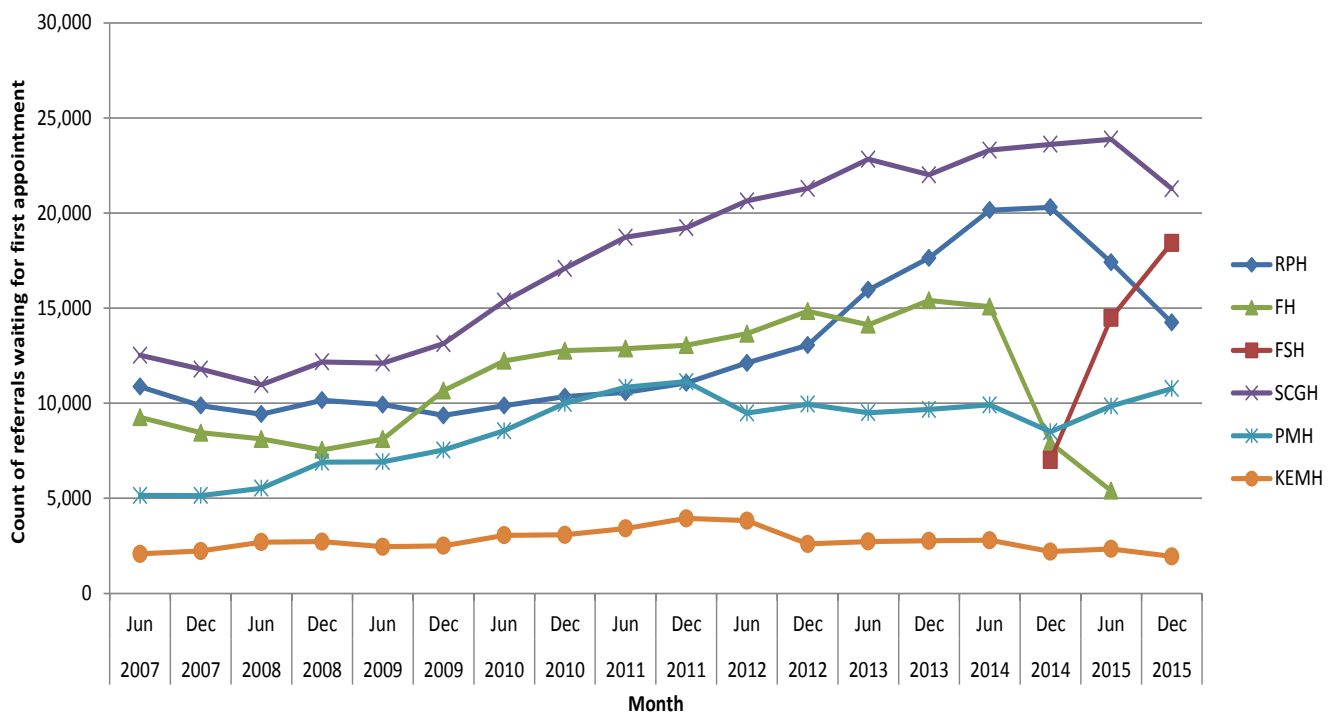
2.2 Number of referrals⁴

Figure 2 and Table 2 display the number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that are yet to have a first appointment. This is the number of referrals yet to be seen as at the end of the reporting month.

In December 2015, the number of referrals yet to be seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 66,665, which is a decrease of 2,872 (or 4.1%) compared to the 69,537 referrals in December 2014 and a 26,764 (or 67.1%) increase in referrals compared to the 39,901 referrals recorded in June 2007.

Since June 2007, approximately 32.7% of the increase in referral numbers was to clinics at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, although this increase has moderated since June 2014. The significant decrease in referrals to Fremantle Hospital is due to reconfiguration of the South Metropolitan Health Service, with several clinics transferred to Fiona Stanley Hospital.

Figure 2: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment



⁴ Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a metropolitan general hospital as Fiona Stanley Hospital is fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

Table 2: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment⁵

End of month	Adult Tertiary Hospitals					Princess Margaret Hospital for Children	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Transfers to Fiona Stanley Hospital from other Tertiary Hospitals	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	10,874	9,266	-	4	12,525	5,149	2,083	39,901
December 2007	9,872	8,446	-	4	11,790	5,142	2,232	37,486
June 2008	9,429	8,119	-	6	10,980	5,534	2,700	36,768
December 2008	10,154	7,544	-	10	12,169	6,896	2,725	39,498
June 2009	9,925	8,115	-	12	12,112	6,917	2,451	39,532
December 2009	9,356	10,665	-	19	13,133	7,536	2,504	43,213
June 2010	9,874	12,230	-	23	15,365	8,557	3,055	49,104
December 2010	10,345	12,759	-	28	17,086	9,986	3,081	53,285
June 2011	10,575	12,875	-	36	18,725	10,834	3,418	56,463
December 2011	11,068	13,049	-	59	19,227	11,136	3,946	58,485
June 2012	12,121	13,656	-	105	20,638	9,488	3,825	59,833
December 2012	13,052	14,839	-	163	21,291	9,946	2,600	61,891
June 2013	15,963	14,124	-	306	22,828	9,500	2,731	65,452
December 2013	17,635	15,406	-	836	22,007	9,676	2,769	68,329
June 2014	20,150	15,078	-	2,335	23,310	9,912	2,793	73,578
December 2014	20,302	7,915	7,010	-	23,612	8,500	2,198	69,537
June 2015	17,408	5,402	14,492	-	23,880	9,850	2,344	73,376
December 2015	14,241	-	18,430	-	21,280	10,767	1,947	66,665

⁵ Fiona Stanley Hospital has accepted referrals from other hospitals that have referral dates prior to Fiona Stanley Hospital opening. As the data and calculations are based on date of referral, a separate column 'Transfers to Fiona Stanley Hospital from other Tertiary Hospitals' has the historical perspective included.

3. Referrals that have been seen

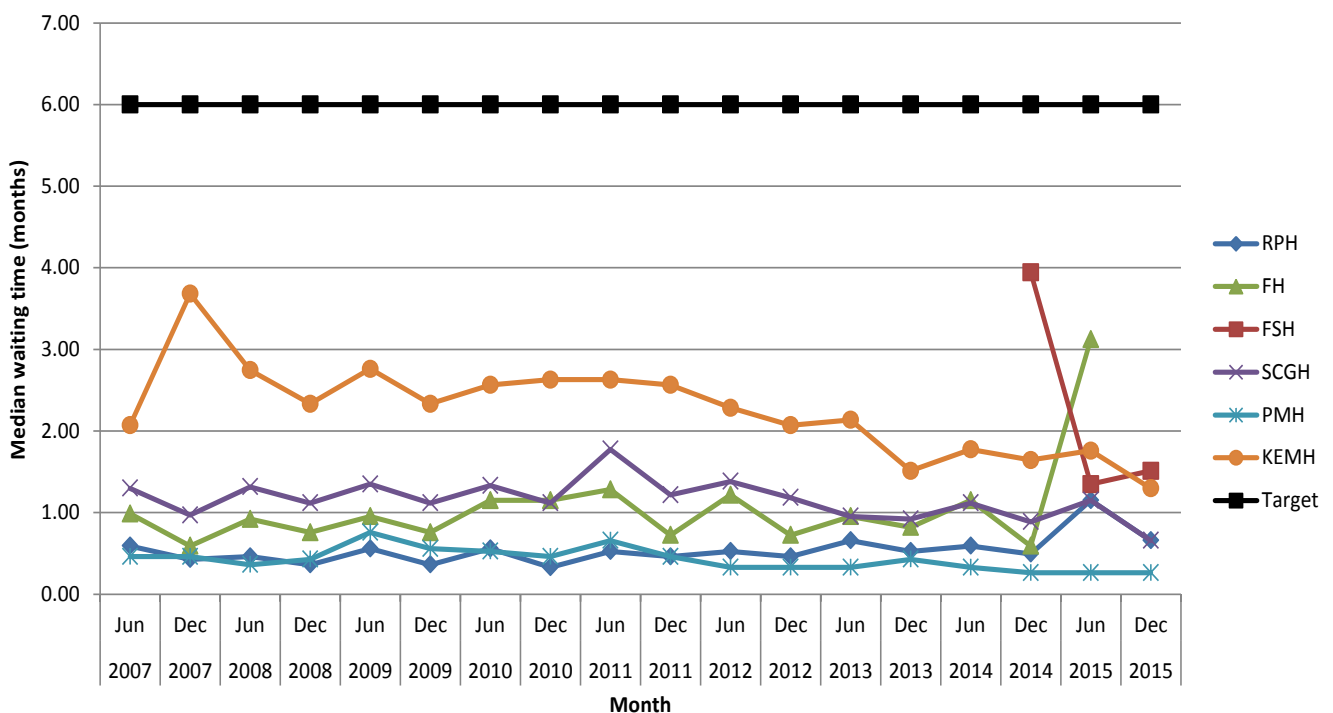
3.1 Waiting time (in months) to the first appointment⁶

Figure 3 and Table 3 display the median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment during the reported month. This is the median waiting time from the point of referral (e.g. GP) to being seen for a first appointment at a public outpatient surgical clinic.

In December 2015, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 0.56 months, the same as the median waiting time in December 2014.

The median waiting times for all metropolitan tertiary hospitals are well below the Government's target of six months. This is in contrast to overall median waiting times of referrals yet to have a first appointment, which are mostly between four and six months.

Figure 3: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment



⁶ Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated metropolitan general as Fiona Stanley Hospital is fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

Table 3: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment

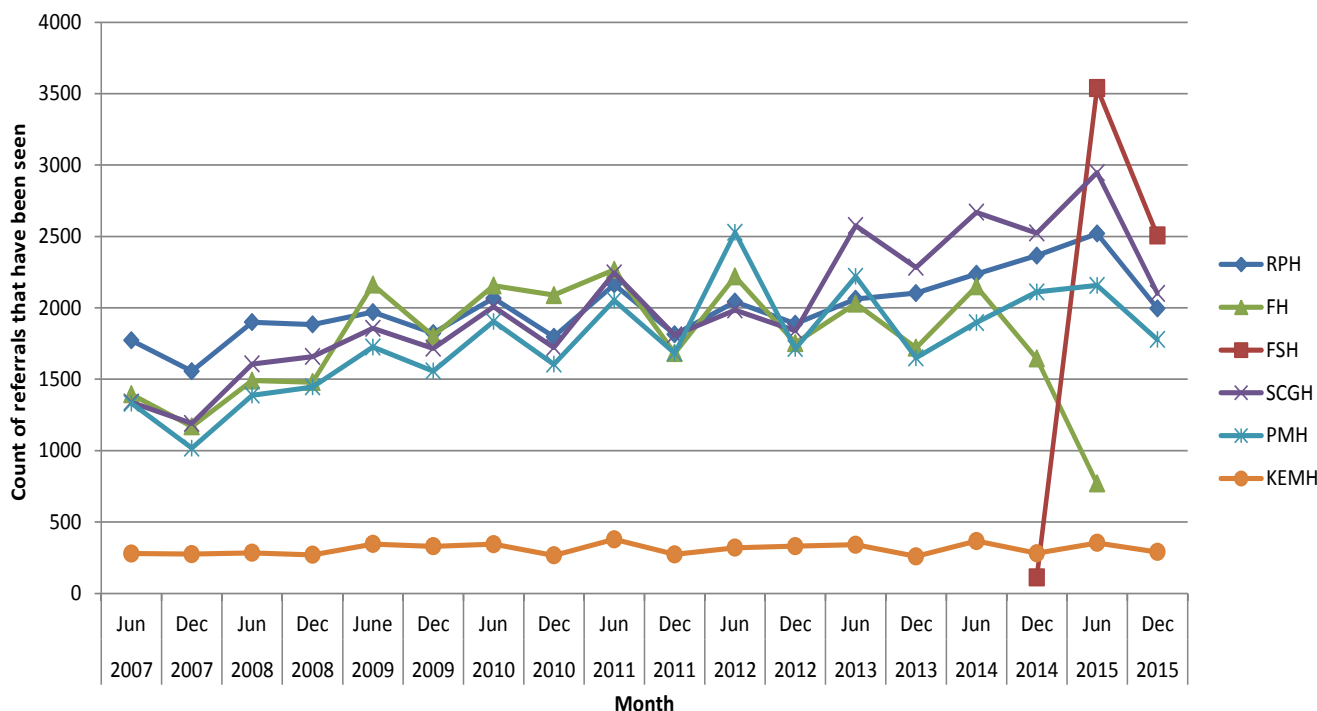
Month of appointment	Adult Tertiary Hospitals				Princess Margaret Hospital for Children	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	0.59	0.99	-	1.30	0.46	2.07	0.89
December 2007	0.43	0.59	-	0.97	0.46	3.68	0.66
June 2008	0.46	0.92	-	1.32	0.36	2.75	0.76
December 2008	0.36	0.76	-	1.12	0.43	2.33	0.66
June 2009	0.56	0.95	-	1.35	0.76	2.76	0.95
December 2009	0.36	0.76	-	1.12	0.56	2.33	0.72
June 2010	0.56	1.15	-	1.33	0.53	2.56	0.95
December 2010	0.33	1.15	-	1.12	0.46	2.63	0.79
June 2011	0.53	1.28	-	1.78	0.66	2.63	1.12
December 2011	0.46	0.72	-	1.22	0.46	2.56	0.76
June 2012	0.53	1.22	-	1.38	0.33	2.28	0.89
December 2012	0.46	0.72	-	1.18	0.33	2.07	0.66
June 2013	0.66	0.95	-	0.95	0.33	2.14	0.79
December 2013	0.53	0.82	-	0.92	0.43	1.51	0.69
June 2014	0.59	1.15	-	1.12	0.33	1.78	0.89
December 2014	0.49	0.59	3.95	0.89	0.26	1.64	0.56
June 2015	1.15	3.12	1.35	1.15	0.26	1.76	1.12
December 2015	0.66	-	1.51	0.66	0.26	1.30	0.56

3.2 Number of referrals⁷

Figure 4 and Table 4 display the number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that have had a first appointment. This is the number of referrals that were seen during the reporting month.

In December 2015, the number of referrals that have been seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 8,671, which is a decrease of 367 (or 4.1%) compared to the 9,038 referrals in December 2014, and 41.8% more than the number of referrals seen in June 2007. This is an average annual growth rate of 4.8%, with fluctuations characterised by highs in June generally followed by lower numbers in December. This may be related to the onset of winter in the middle of the year and reduced availability of medical and clinical staff during the end of the calendar year period.

Figure 4: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment



⁷ Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a metropolitan general as Fiona Stanley Hospital is fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

Table 4: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment⁸

Month of appointment	Adult Tertiary Hospitals				Princess Margaret Hospital for Children	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	1,772	1,394	-	1,338	1,331	279	6,114
December 2007	1,556	1,169	-	1,190	1,017	275	5,207
June 2008	1,899	1,491	-	1,607	1,388	284	6,669
December 2008	1,883	1,480	-	1,659	1,446	270	6,738
June 2009	1,970	2,162	-	1,857	1,725	346	8,060
December 2009	1,823	1,803	-	1,716	1,557	330	7,229
June 2010	2,067	2,156	-	2,008	1,904	345	8,480
December 2010	1,797	2,089	-	1,721	1,605	266	7,478
June 2011	2,164	2,266	-	2,244	2,052	379	9,105
December 2011	1,814	1,682	-	1,810	1,682	273	7,261
June 2012	2,042	2,219	-	1,985	2,528	320	9,094
December 2012	1,888	1,753	-	1,839	1,714	331	7,525
June 2013	2,062	2,030	-	2,575	2,219	341	9,227
December 2013	2,103	1,720	-	2,283	1,650	259	8,015
June 2014	2,237	2,150	-	2,669	1,896	367	9,319
December 2014	2,366	1,645	111	2,524	2,111	281	9,038
June 2015	2,520	770	3,539	2,946	2,157	354	12,286
December 2015	1,996	-	2,506	2,101	1,778	290	8,671

⁸ The increase in referrals that have had a first appointment at Fiona Stanley Hospital for June 2015 reflects the outpatient clinics at this hospital are now operational. Referrals that would have previously been referred to the clinics at Fremantle Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital Shenton Park Campus, are now handled at Fiona Stanley Hospital.

3.3 Outpatient appointment outcomes⁹

Figure 5 and Table 5 refer to the outcomes of outpatient appointments at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that either resulted in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list or had an unknown outcome. The figures indicate that a small percentage of appointments result in placement on the elective surgery waiting list.

The low percentage of appointment outcomes resulting in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list reflects that patient pathways often consist of multiple appointments prior to a decision being made to place the patient on the elective surgery waiting list. In addition, some appointments that result in placement on the elective surgery waiting list may also require a subsequent appointment, and the coding may reflect the latter outcome. For these two reasons, relatively few appointments have the outcome resulting in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list.

Since 2007, the proportion of appointments that result in placement on a waiting list is approximately 6.0%. The 2015 full year figure of 7.4% indicates that with increased total number of appointments compared to previous years, more appointments are being placed on the elective surgery waiting list.

There is still a percentage of appointments with unknown outcomes, although the figure is reducing over time, from 11.6% in 2007 to 4.1% in 2015.

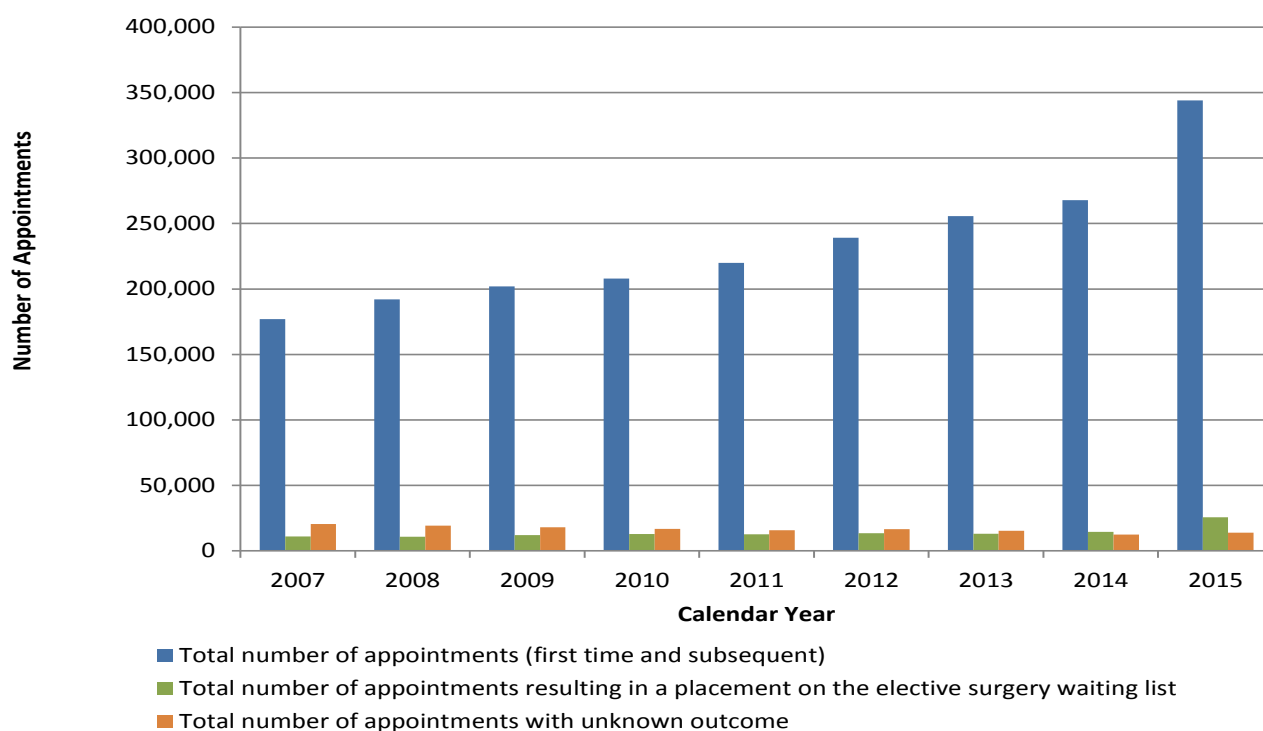
It must be noted that the data collection system and work processes continue to be refined, therefore caution is advised when interpreting the data below. The figures are subject to change as systems and processes improve over time.

⁹ Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a secondary hospital as Fiona Stanley Hospital is fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

Table 5: Outcomes of outpatient appointments at public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals

Referral Year (calendar year)	Total number of appointments (first time and subsequent)	Total number of appointments resulting in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list	% of appointments placed on the elective surgery waiting list	Total number of appointments with unknown outcome	% of appointments with unknown outcome
2007	177,055	10,884	6.1%	20,478	11.6%
2008	192,120	10,813	5.6%	19,263	10.0%
2009	202,072	11,949	5.9%	17,920	8.9%
2010	207,912	12,720	6.1%	16,818	8.1%
2011	219,905	12,673	5.8%	15,691	7.1%
2012	239,146	13,430	5.6%	16,470	6.9%
2013	255,668	12,971	5.1%	15,271	6.0%
2014	267,829	14,373	5.4%	12,355	4.6%
2015	344,128	25,608	7.4%	13,944	4.1%

Figure 5: Outcomes of outpatient appointments at public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals





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