



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

# REFERRALS TO PUBLIC OUTPATIENT SURGICAL CLINICS

December 2016



Date issued: 11 April 2017

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ISSN 1836-9677 (print)

**Suggested citation**

Department of Health, Western Australia.

*Referrals to Public Outpatient Surgical Clinics: December 2016.*

Perth: Performance Reporting Branch, Purchasing & System Performance Division  
Department of Health, 2017.

**Report produced by**

Performance Reporting Branch, Purchasing & System Performance Division,  
Department of Health.

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## AT A GLANCE\*

- As at the end of December 2016, there were 69,741 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 increased by 9.6% between December 2015 and December 2016.
- The median waiting time for those patients who have had their first appointment was 0.59 months in December 2016, which is an increase of 0.10 months (20.0%) when compared with the median waiting time in December 2015.

\* 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
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. This biannual report has significant and longstanding limitations related to method, data integrity and interoperability problems between two clinical applications used by Health Service Providers.

Health Service Providers are working with Health Support Services to resolve clinical applications that impact 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 undergoing development. Caution is advised when using and interpreting data from this data collection.
- There is ongoing revision and data updates from June 2007 to the current month, therefore the most recent edition of a report should always be consulted. Variations may occur for a number of reasons, such as updates to procedure codes and delays in data processing. Data are not revised in previously published editions.
- The Quality Assurance and Control Project commenced in January 2016. This continues to improve data integrity of the NAPAAWL Data Collection.
- The NAPAAWL Data Collection does not differentiate between days when the patient is ready or not ready for care. Consequently, all outpatients are notionally considered ready for care when a referral has been initiated. This also means the days waiting continue to accrue whether a patient is ready for care or not.
- Non admitted data are collected based on clinic information and not clinician specialty or patient diagnosis.
- The scope of this report is limited to surgical referrals. The method for identifying patients awaiting appointments that precede their addition to surgical waiting lists is still under development. The list of surgical referrals may be refined in future reporting.
- Not all patients that are referred to Surgical Outpatient Clinics will be placed on the Elective Surgery Waitlist.
- The NAPAAWL Data Collection receives data from Public Surgical Outpatient Clinics. Varying work practices and quality may affect the accuracy of reported figures.
- Effective December 2013, referrals identified for long term management of patients and Princess Margaret Hospital Dermatology clinics, are excluded from this report.
- Effective December 2016, referrals to pain management clinics at Fiona Stanley Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital are excluded from this report as well as Fiona Stanley Hospital Dermatology clinics.
- Data for Fiona Stanley Hospital are 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 specialist hospital after Fiona Stanley Hospital became fully operational. Therefore, care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 onwards to data prior to this month.

## Glossary

**Median waiting time:** This refers to 50% of the waiting times can be found at or below this value. The waiting time is calculated from the date the referral is received by the hospital to the date that the first appointment is attended.

# Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Information on referrals to public outpatient clinics .....	1
1.2	Information in this report .....	1
2.	Referrals waiting to be seen .....	3
2.1	Waiting time (in months) for referrals .....	3
2.2	Number of referrals .....	5
3.	Referrals that have been seen .....	7
3.1	Waiting time (in months) to the first appointment .....	7
3.2	Number of referrals .....	9
3.3	Outpatient appointment outcomes .....	11

## List of Tables

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 appointment .....	4
Table 2:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment.....	6
Table 3:	Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment .....	8
Table 4:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment.....	10
Table 5:	Outcomes of outpatient appointments at public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals .....	12

## List of Figures

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 .....	3
Figure 2:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment.....	5
Figure 3:	Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment .....	7
Figure 4:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment.....	9
Figure 5:	Outcomes of outpatient appointments at public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals .....	12

# 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).

## 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.<sup>1</sup> This target is nominal and does not relate to a National target as the 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: Fiona Stanley Hospital, King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Fremantle Hospital is now designated a specialist 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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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. Since 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

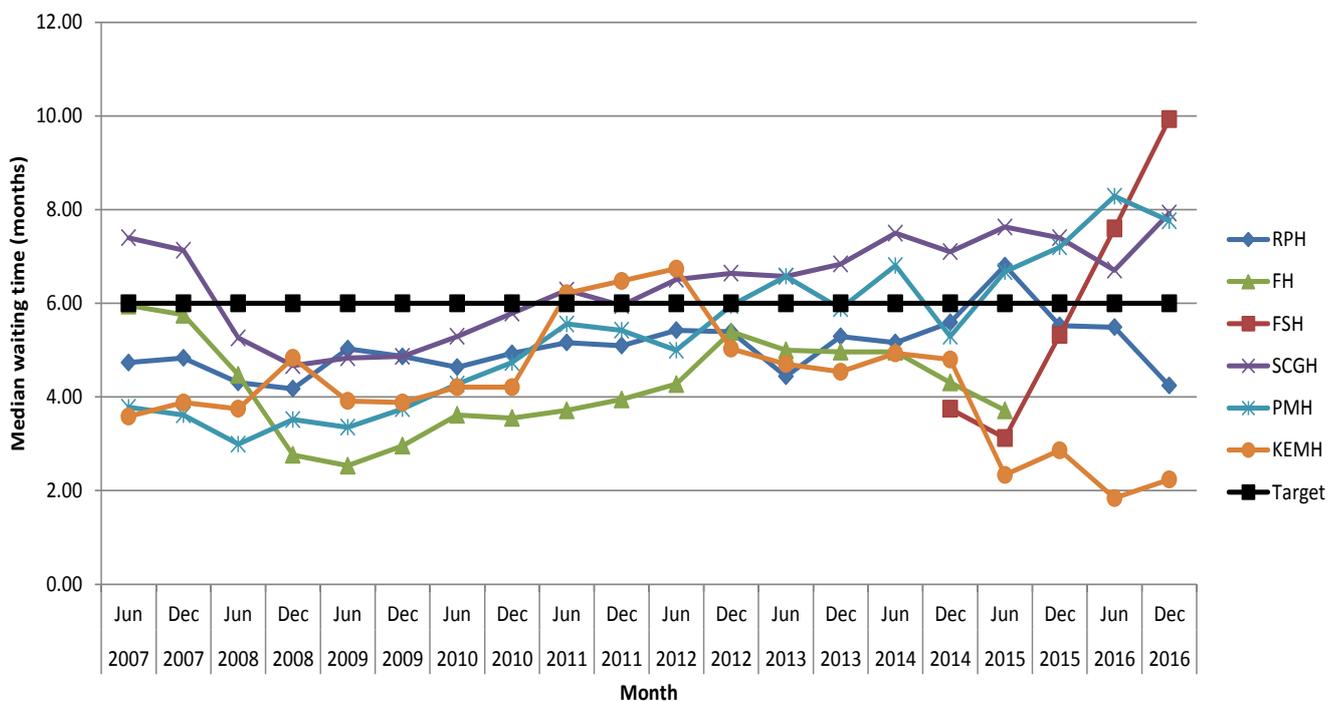
### 2.1 Waiting time (in months) for referrals<sup>2</sup>

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 being received 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 2016, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 7.66 months, which is an increase of 1.45 months (23.3%) when compared with the median waiting time in December 2015, and an increase of 2.24 months compared with June 2007.

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 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, December 2015, June 2016 and December 2016. 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 thirteen out of the twenty months reported. Fiona Stanley Hospital had a median waiting time for referrals that are yet to have a first appointment longer than six months in June 2016 and December 2016.

**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**



<sup>2</sup> Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a specialist 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 appointment<sup>3</sup>**

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	4.73	5.95	-	26.45	7.40	3.78	3.58	5.42
December 2007	4.83	5.75	-	32.50	7.13	3.62	3.88	5.39
June 2008	4.31	4.47	-	30.38	5.26	2.99	3.75	4.31
December 2008	4.18	2.76	-	8.83	4.67	3.52	4.83	3.91
June 2009	5.03	2.53	-	11.56	4.83	3.35	3.91	3.95
December 2009	4.87	2.96	-	14.76	4.87	3.75	3.88	4.01
June 2010	4.64	3.62	-	14.50	5.29	4.27	4.21	4.41
December 2010	4.93	3.55	-	16.14	5.79	4.73	4.21	4.70
June 2011	5.16	3.72	-	19.15	6.28	5.56	6.21	5.06
December 2011	5.10	3.95	-	12.99	5.95	5.42	6.48	5.16
June 2012	5.42	4.27	-	6.35	6.51	5.00	6.74	5.39
December 2012	5.39	5.39	-	8.45	6.64	5.95	5.03	5.95
June 2013	4.44	5.00	-	6.84	6.58	6.58	4.70	5.49
December 2013	5.29	4.96	-	3.91	6.84	5.88	4.54	5.75
June 2014	5.16	4.96	-	3.78	7.50	6.81	4.93	5.88
December 2014	5.59	4.31	3.75	-	7.10	5.29	4.80	5.56
June 2015	6.81	3.72	3.12	-	7.63	6.67	2.33	5.49
December 2015	5.52	-	5.33	-	7.40	7.20	2.86	6.21
June 2016	5.49	-	7.59	-	6.71	8.28	1.84	6.87
December 2016	4.24	-	9.93	-	7.92	7.76	2.24	7.66

<sup>3</sup> 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.

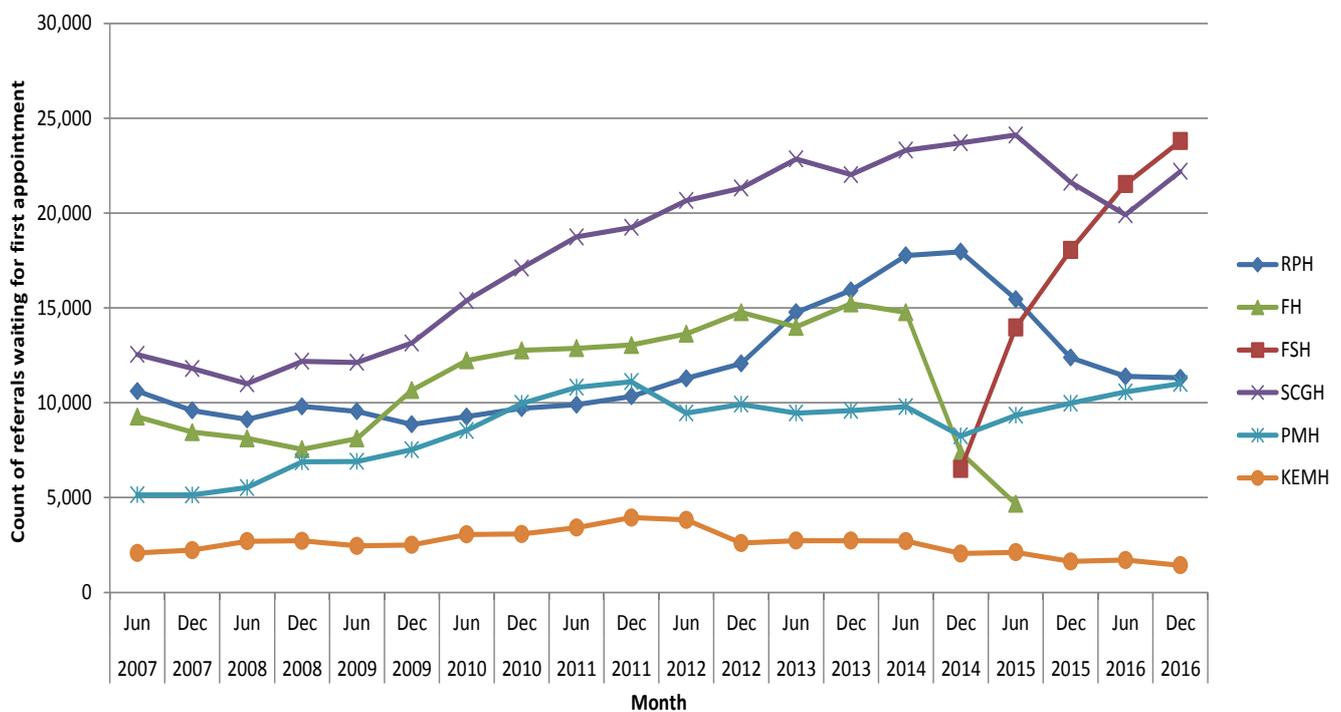
## 2.2 Number of referrals<sup>4</sup>

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.

The total number of referrals yet to be seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals has steadily grown since June 2007, peaked in June 2014 and has moderated since then. In December 2016, the number of referrals yet to be seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 69,741, which is an increase of 6,091 (or 9.6%) compared to the 63,650 referrals in December 2015 and a 30,085 (or 75.9%) increase in referrals compared to the 39,656 referrals recorded in June 2007.

Since June 2007, approximately 32.1% of the increase in referral numbers was to clinics at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, although this increase has moderated since June 2015.

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



<sup>4</sup> Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a specialist 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 appointment<sup>5</sup>**

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	10,615	9,266	-	4	12,542	5,146	2,083	39,656
December 2007	9,590	8,446	-	4	11,807	5,140	2,232	37,219
June 2008	9,117	8,119	-	6	10,997	5,529	2,700	36,468
December 2008	9,807	7,544	-	10	12,186	6,881	2,725	39,153
June 2009	9,542	8,114	-	12	12,129	6,905	2,451	39,153
December 2009	8,861	10,665	-	19	13,151	7,525	2,504	42,725
June 2010	9,273	12,229	-	23	15,382	8,541	3,055	48,503
December 2010	9,707	12,758	-	28	17,104	9,967	3,081	52,645
June 2011	9,898	12,875	-	34	18,743	10,813	3,418	55,781
December 2011	10,334	13,046	-	55	19,245	11,112	3,946	57,738
June 2012	11,280	13,634	-	101	20,659	9,457	3,825	58,956
December 2012	12,066	14,770	-	157	21,314	9,916	2,600	60,823
June 2013	14,764	14,001	-	297	22,852	9,456	2,729	64,099
December 2013	15,921	15,228	-	797	22,024	9,590	2,730	66,290
June 2014	17,766	14,770	-	2,252	23,317	9,789	2,710	70,604
December 2014	17,957	7,361	6,512	-	23,704	8,245	2,050	65,829
June 2015	15,458	4,668	13,961	-	24,111	9,337	2,118	69,653
December 2015	12,382	-	18,050	-	21,619	9,970	1,629	63,650
June 2016	11,387	-	21,521	-	19,908	10,570	1,707	65,093
December 2016	11,312	-	23,794	-	22,196	11,008	1,431	69,741

<sup>5</sup> 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

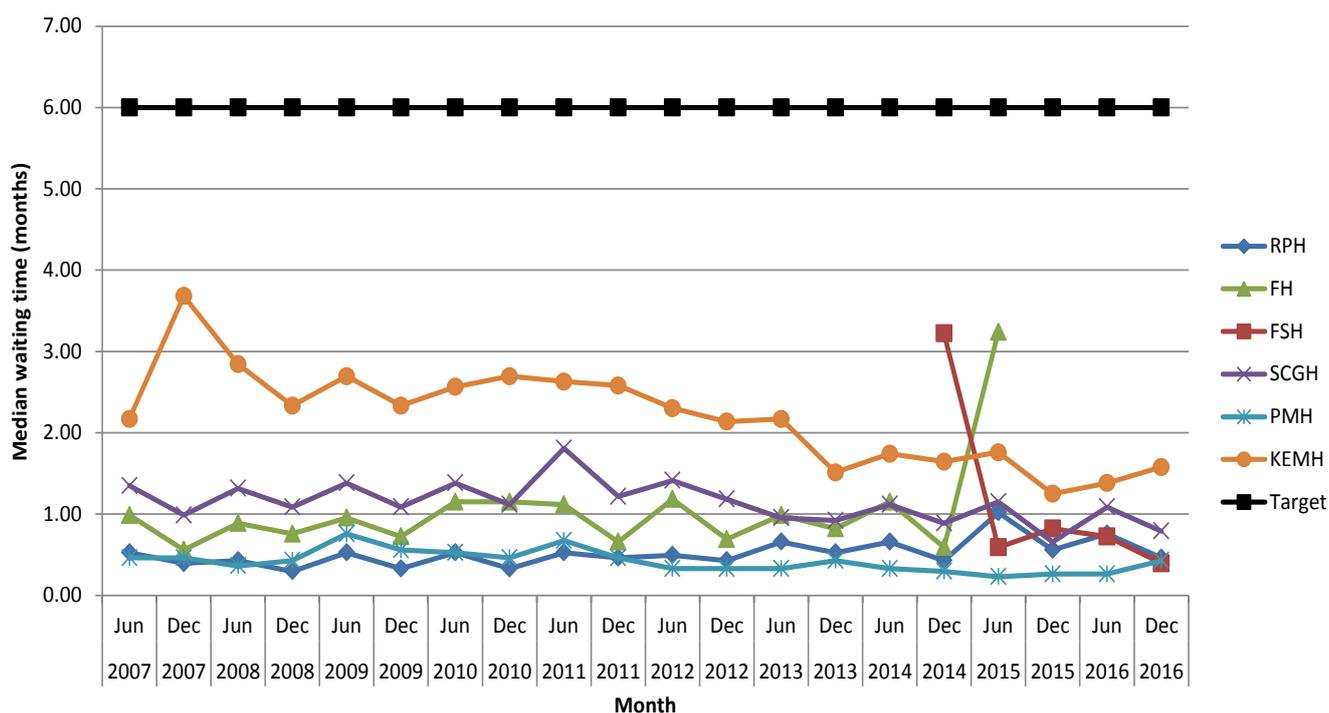
## 3.1 Waiting time (in months) to the first appointment<sup>6</sup>

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 being received to being seen for a first appointment at a public outpatient surgical clinic.

In December 2016, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 0.59 months, which is an increase of 0.10 months (20.0%) when compared with the median waiting time in December 2015.

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**



<sup>6</sup> Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a specialist 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 3: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment**

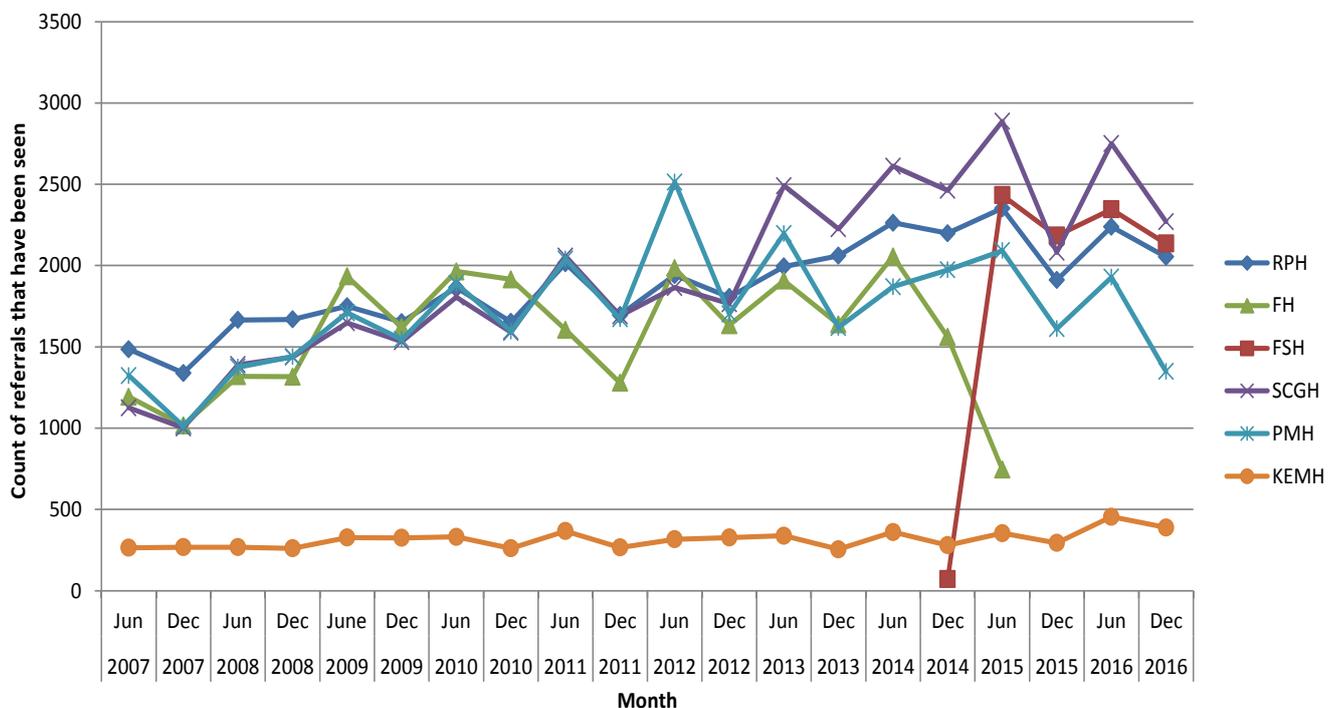
Month of appointment	Adult Tertiary Hospitals				Princess Margaret Hospital for Children	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	0.53	0.99	-	1.35	0.46	2.17	0.89
December 2007	0.39	0.56	-	0.99	0.46	3.68	0.62
June 2008	0.43	0.89	-	1.32	0.36	2.84	0.72
December 2008	0.30	0.76	-	1.08	0.43	2.33	0.59
June 2009	0.53	0.95	-	1.38	0.76	2.70	0.95
December 2009	0.33	0.72	-	1.08	0.56	2.33	0.69
June 2010	0.53	1.15	-	1.38	0.53	2.56	0.95
December 2010	0.33	1.15	-	1.12	0.46	2.70	0.79
June 2011	0.53	1.12	-	1.81	0.67	2.63	1.08
December 2011	0.46	0.66	-	1.22	0.46	2.58	0.72
June 2012	0.49	1.18	-	1.41	0.33	2.30	0.85
December 2012	0.43	0.69	-	1.18	0.33	2.14	0.66
June 2013	0.66	0.99	-	0.95	0.33	2.17	0.79
December 2013	0.53	0.82	-	0.92	0.43	1.51	0.66
June 2014	0.66	1.15	-	1.12	0.33	1.74	0.89
December 2014	0.43	0.59	3.22	0.89	0.30	1.64	0.56
June 2015	1.02	3.24	0.59	1.15	0.23	1.76	0.89
December 2015	0.56	-	0.82	0.66	0.26	1.25	0.49
June 2016	0.76	-	0.72	1.08	0.26	1.38	0.72
December 2016	0.46	-	0.39	0.79	0.43	1.58	0.59

### 3.2 Number of referrals<sup>7</sup>

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 2016, the number of referrals that have been seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 8,196, which is an increase of 115 (or 1.4%) compared with the 8,081 referrals in December 2015, and 52.1% more than the number of referrals seen in June 2007. This is a compound annual growth rate of 4.5%, 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**



<sup>7</sup> Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a specialist 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 4: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment<sup>8</sup>**

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	1,485	1,193	-	1,125	1,323	264	5,390
December 2007	1,339	1,017	-	1,001	1,012	268	4,637
June 2008	1,665	1,319	-	1,390	1,375	268	6,017
December 2008	1,669	1,316	-	1,437	1,440	261	6,123
June 2009	1,750	1,933	-	1,648	1,710	327	7,368
December 2009	1,652	1,621	-	1,532	1,545	325	6,675
June 2010	1,865	1,964	-	1,806	1,890	331	7,856
December 2010	1,653	1,915	-	1,590	1,596	261	7,015
June 2011	2,013	1,605	-	2,058	2,040	367	8,083
December 2011	1,696	1,279	-	1,691	1,672	266	6,604
June 2012	1,941	1,984	-	1,865	2,514	317	8,621
December 2012	1,806	1,633	-	1,765	1,703	327	7,234
June 2013	1,994	1,907	-	2,491	2,196	338	8,926
December 2013	2,060	1,638	-	2,226	1,619	255	7,798
June 2014	2,263	2,056	-	2,611	1,870	361	9,161
December 2014	2,199	1,561	72	2,462	1,973	280	8,547
June 2015	2,352	746	2,433	2,887	2,092	354	10,864
December 2015	1,911	-	2,184	2,081	1,611	294	8,081
June 2016	2,239	-	2,346	2,750	1,928	455	9,718
December 2016	2,053	-	2,135	2,270	1,349	389	8,196

<sup>8</sup> 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 outcomes<sup>9</sup>

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 6.9%. The 2016 full year figure of 8.0% indicates that with increased total number of appointments compared with previous years, more appointments are being placed on the elective surgery waiting list.

There still is a percentage of appointments with unknown outcomes, although the figure is reducing over time; from 13.5% in 2007 to 3.1% in December 2016.

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

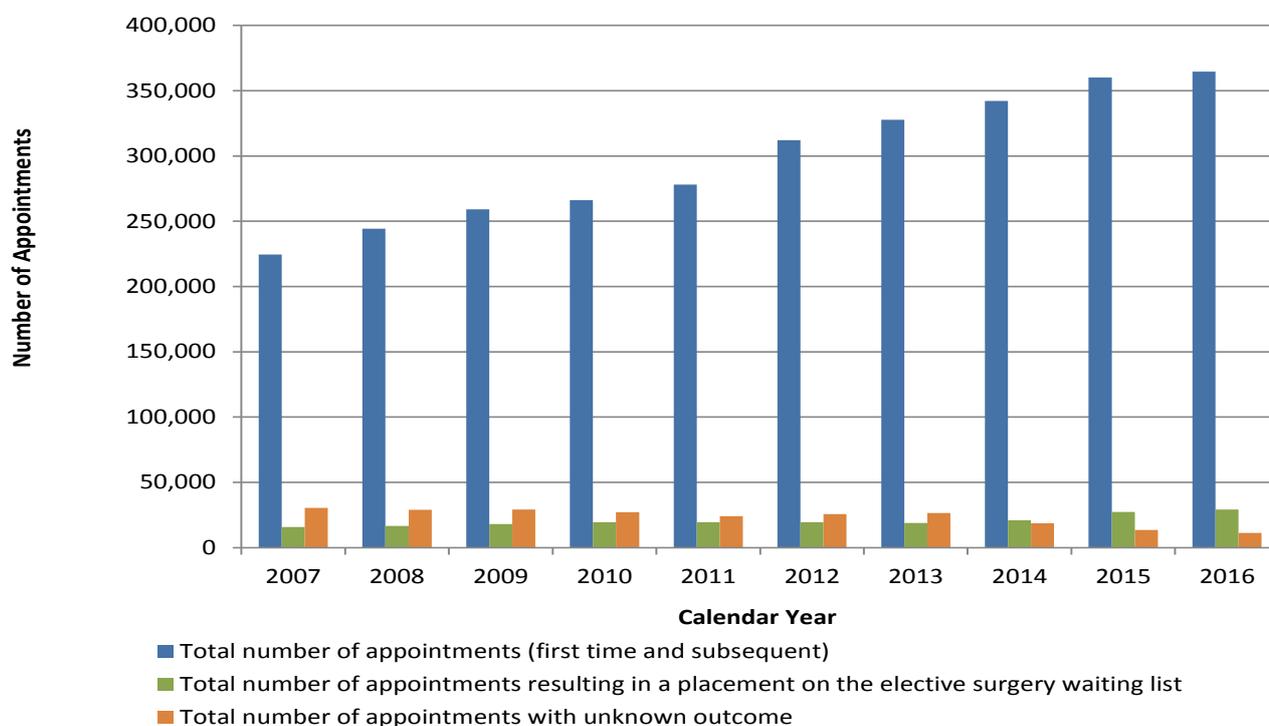
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<sup>9</sup> Note there is no Fremantle Hospital data from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated a secondary hospital as Fiona Stanley Hospital is fully operational. Therefore, care needs to be taken when comparing data from July 2015 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	224,594	15,805	7.0%	30,411	13.5%
2008	244,262	16,626	6.8%	28,969	11.9%
2009	259,129	18,087	7.0%	29,144	11.2%
2010	266,067	19,542	7.3%	27,123	10.2%
2011	278,194	19,593	7.0%	24,036	8.6%
2012	312,050	19,446	6.2%	25,628	8.2%
2013	327,777	18,853	5.8%	26,490	8.1%
2014	342,119	20,989	6.1%	18,734	5.5%
2015	360,133	27,273	7.6%	13,573	3.8%
2016	364,655	29,099	8.0%	11,182	3.1%

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





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