



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

REFERRALS TO PUBLIC OUTPATIENT SURGICAL CLINICS

June 2015



Delivering a **Healthy WA**

Date issued: 15 August 2015

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ISSN 1836-9677 (print)

Suggested citation

Department of Health, Western Australia.

Referrals to Public Outpatient Surgical Clinics: June 2015.

Perth: Performance Reporting Branch, Purchasing & System Performance Division
Department of Health, 2015.

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 June 2015, there were 71,065 referrals waiting to be seen at surgical outpatient clinics for a first appointment (for further details see pages 5 and 6).
- Outpatient demand decreased by 2.7% from June 2014 to June 2015, with the median waiting time remaining steady. The overall median waiting time is below 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 increased from 0.89 months in June 2014 to 1.15 months in June 2015.
- Of the 171,334 total appointments for the 2015 calendar year (YTD), only 7.4% resulted in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list, and a further 3.8% 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), which has data from TOPAS (The Open Patient Administration System) and webPAS (Web-based Patient Administration System). The key issues associated with the NAPAAWL Data Collection that need to be taken into consideration when assessing reports based on it are:

- The NAPAAWL Data Collection is a new data collection. The data provided are currently undergoing validation and caution is advised when using and interpreting data from this data collection.
- 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 expansion in future reporting. This expansion is likely to lead to increased median waiting times.
- 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 still waiting for their appointments.
- 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, Princess Margaret Hospital data excludes Dermatology, as these referrals are not considered surgical at this hospital.
- **Data for Fiona Stanley Hospital are now included. Referrals are shown against FSH prior to the opening of this hospital due to transferred patients retaining their original date of referral. This ensures wait times are reported accurately.**
- All referrals at all sites coded as ongoing management are now excluded.
- The significant decrease in referrals to Fremantle Hospital is due to the reconfiguration of the South Metropolitan Health Service, with several clinics transferred to Fiona Stanley Hospital.

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 values is skewed by a small number of very high values.

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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, Fremantle Hospital, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children and King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women.

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 referrals

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 June 2015, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 5.69 months, which is a decrease of 0.49 months (8.0%) when compared with the median waiting time in June 2014, and an increase of 0.23 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 6.18 months and is now slowly decreasing.

For referrals that are yet to have a first appointment at Fremantle Hospital, the median waiting time never exceeded six months. 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 and June 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 ten out of the seventeen 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

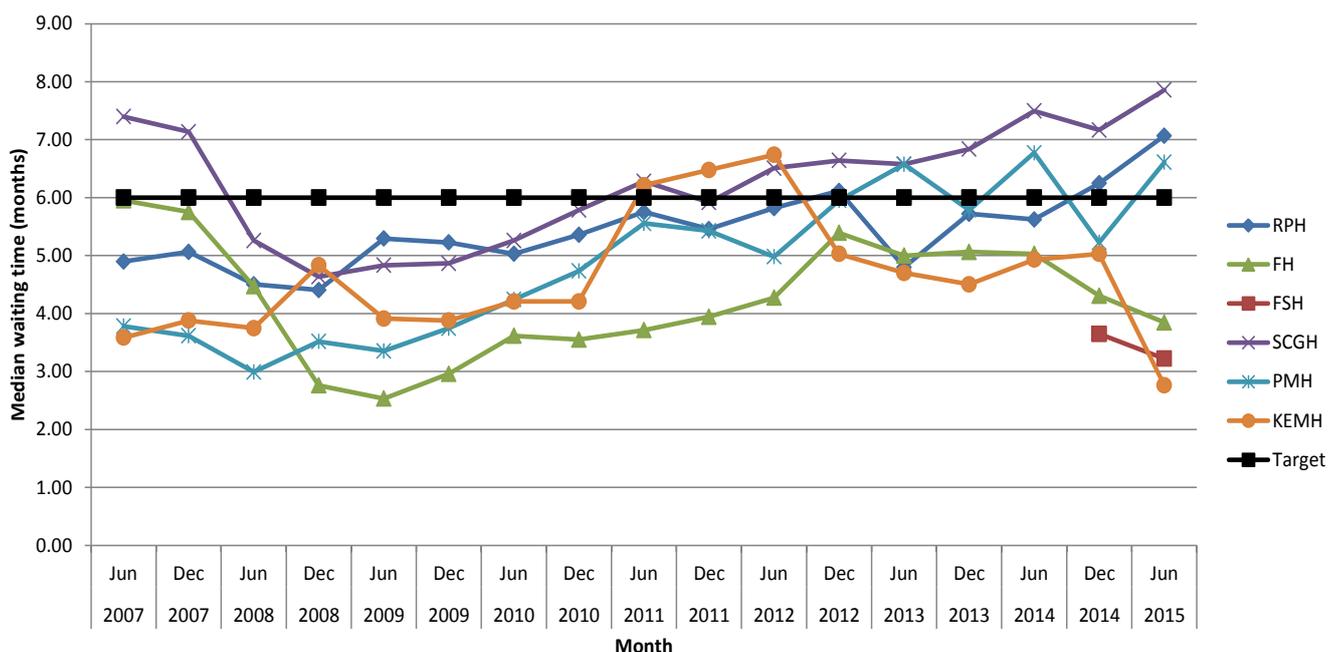


Table 1: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment

| 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 | - | 22.13 | 7.40 | 3.78 | 3.58 | 5.46 |
| December 2007 | 5.06 | 5.75 | - | 28.18 | 7.13 | 3.62 | 3.88 | 5.46 |
| June 2008 | 4.50 | 4.47 | - | 26.60 | 5.26 | 2.99 | 3.75 | 4.34 |
| December 2008 | 4.41 | 2.76 | - | 6.41 | 4.64 | 3.52 | 4.83 | 3.95 |
| June 2009 | 5.29 | 2.53 | - | 10.75 | 4.83 | 3.35 | 3.91 | 4.08 |
| December 2009 | 5.23 | 2.96 | - | 12.13 | 4.87 | 3.75 | 3.88 | 4.11 |
| June 2010 | 5.03 | 3.62 | - | 12.53 | 5.26 | 4.24 | 4.21 | 4.44 |
| December 2010 | 5.36 | 3.55 | - | 15.95 | 5.79 | 4.73 | 4.21 | 4.83 |
| June 2011 | 5.75 | 3.72 | - | 18.67 | 6.28 | 5.56 | 6.21 | 5.16 |
| December 2011 | 5.46 | 3.95 | - | 11.47 | 5.92 | 5.42 | 6.48 | 5.23 |
| June 2012 | 5.82 | 4.27 | - | 6.89 | 6.51 | 4.98 | 6.74 | 5.46 |
| December 2012 | 6.12 | 5.39 | - | 8.47 | 6.64 | 5.95 | 5.03 | 6.08 |
| June 2013 | 4.80 | 5.00 | - | 6.84 | 6.58 | 6.58 | 4.70 | 5.62 |
| December 2013 | 5.72 | 5.06 | - | 3.72 | 6.84 | 5.79 | 4.50 | 5.88 |
| June 2014 | 5.62 | 5.03 | - | 3.83 | 7.50 | 6.77 | 4.93 | 6.18 |
| December 2014 | 6.25 | 4.31 | 3.65 | - | 7.17 | 5.23 | 5.03 | 5.75 |
| June 2015 | 7.07 | 3.85 | 3.22 | - | 7.86 | 6.61 | 2.76 | 5.69 |

2.2 Number of referrals

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 June 2015, the number of referrals yet to be seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 71,065, which is a decrease of 2,003 (or 2.7%) compared to the 73,068 referrals in June 2014 and a 31,190 (or 78.2%) increase in referrals compared to the 39,875 referrals recorded in June 2007.

Since June 2007, approximately 35.3% of the increase in referral numbers was to clinics at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, although this increase has moderated since June 2014 to only 230 more referrals to this site. 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

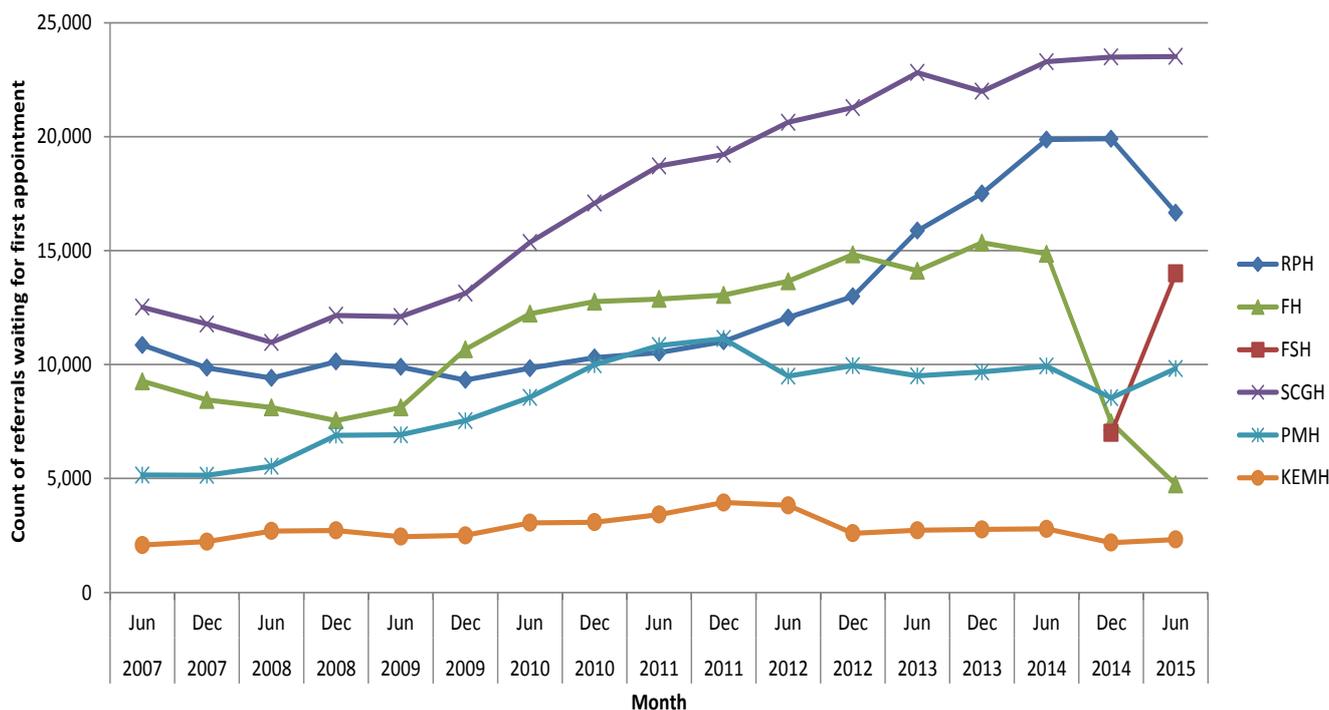


Table 2: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment

| 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 | 10,860 | 9,266 | - | 3 | 12,515 | 5,149 | 2,082 | 39,875 |
| December 2007 | 9,856 | 8,446 | - | 3 | 11,780 | 5,142 | 2,231 | 37,458 |
| June 2008 | 9,408 | 8,119 | - | 5 | 10,970 | 5,534 | 2,699 | 36,735 |
| December 2008 | 10,128 | 7,544 | - | 9 | 12,159 | 6,897 | 2,724 | 39,461 |
| June 2009 | 9,896 | 8,115 | - | 11 | 12,102 | 6,917 | 2,450 | 39,491 |
| December 2009 | 9,324 | 10,665 | - | 18 | 13,123 | 7,536 | 2,503 | 43,169 |
| June 2010 | 9,836 | 12,230 | - | 22 | 15,355 | 8,557 | 3,054 | 49,054 |
| December 2010 | 10,302 | 12,759 | - | 27 | 17,076 | 9,988 | 3,080 | 53,232 |
| June 2011 | 10,523 | 12,875 | - | 35 | 18,715 | 10,835 | 3,417 | 56,400 |
| December 2011 | 11,014 | 13,050 | - | 58 | 19,215 | 11,138 | 3,945 | 58,420 |
| June 2012 | 12,064 | 13,653 | - | 104 | 20,626 | 9,488 | 3,824 | 59,759 |
| December 2012 | 12,990 | 14,831 | - | 160 | 21,275 | 9,949 | 2,599 | 61,804 |
| June 2013 | 15,876 | 14,115 | - | 304 | 22,812 | 9,505 | 2,730 | 65,342 |
| December 2013 | 17,507 | 15,344 | - | 833 | 21,989 | 9,675 | 2,766 | 68,114 |
| June 2014 | 19,867 | 14,863 | - | 2,330 | 23,287 | 9,932 | 2,789 | 73,068 |
| December 2014 | 19,905 | 7,455 | 6,999 | - | 23,490 | 8,539 | 2,190 | 68,578 |
| June 2015 | 16,665 | 4,737 | 13,997 | - | 23,517 | 9,826 | 2,323 | 71,065 |

3. Referrals that have been seen

3.1 Waiting time (in months) to the first appointment

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 June 2015, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 1.15 months, which is an increase of 0.26 months (or 29.6%) compared with the median waiting time in June 2014 of 0.89 months.

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 five 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

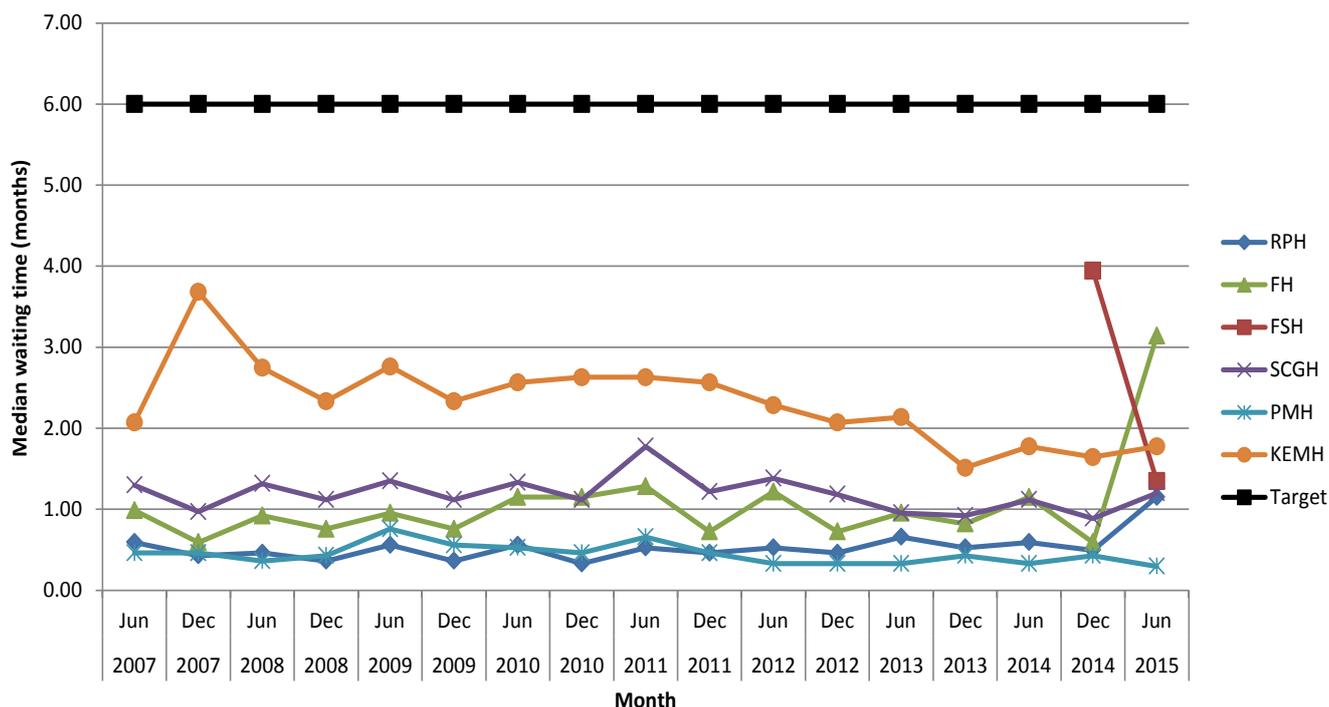


Table 3: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment

| 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 | 0.43 | 1.64 | 0.66 |
| June 2015 | 1.15 | 3.14 | 1.35 | 1.20 | 0.30 | 1.78 | 1.15 |

3.2 Number of referrals

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 June 2015, the number of referrals that have been seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 12,072, which is an increase of 2,753 (or 29.5%) compared to the 9,319 referrals in June 2014, and over 97% more than the number of referrals seen in June 2007. This is an average annual growth rate of 8.9%, 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

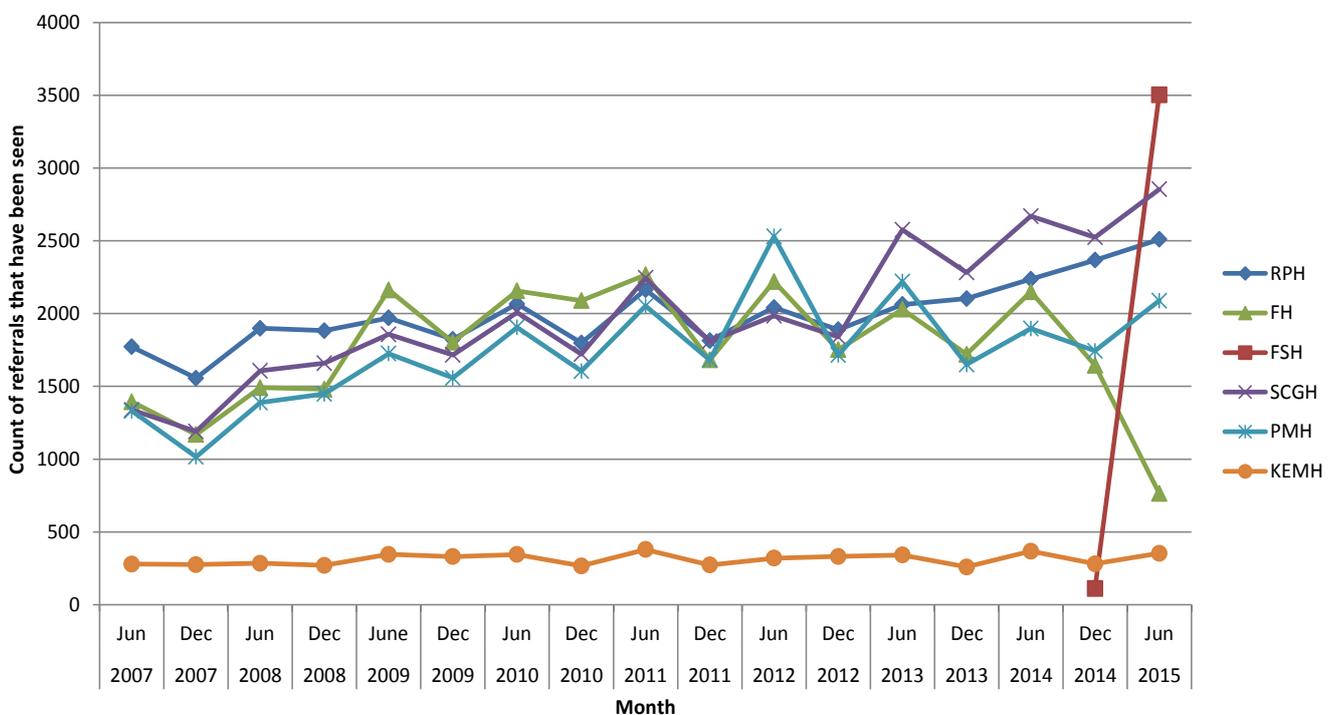


Table 4: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment²

| 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 | 1,016 | 275 | 5,206 |
| June 2008 | 1,899 | 1,491 | | 1,607 | 1,388 | 284 | 6,669 |
| December 2008 | 1,883 | 1,480 | | 1,659 | 1,448 | 270 | 6,740 |
| June 2009 | 1,970 | 2,162 | | 1,857 | 1,725 | 346 | 8,060 |
| December 2009 | 1,823 | 1,803 | | 1,716 | 1,558 | 330 | 7,230 |
| June 2010 | 2,067 | 2,156 | | 2,008 | 1,905 | 345 | 8,481 |
| December 2010 | 1,798 | 2,089 | | 1,721 | 1,605 | 266 | 7,479 |
| 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 | 2,041 | 2,220 | | 1,985 | 2,529 | 320 | 9,095 |
| December 2012 | 1,889 | 1,752 | | 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 | | 2,282 | 1,650 | 259 | 8,014 |
| June 2014 | 2,236 | 2,150 | | 2,669 | 1,897 | 367 | 9,319 |
| December 2014 | 2,367 | 1,645 | 111 | 2,524 | 1,744 | 281 | 8,672 |
| June 2015 | 2,510 | 764 | 3,503 | 2,854 | 2,088 | 353 | 12,072 |

² 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

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.

The proportion of appointments that result in placement on a waiting list is relatively steady at approximately 6.7%. There has been a marginal decrease in the proportion over recent years, with the last full year (2014) figure of 6.2% indicating either an increase in overall outpatient appointments, a genuine decrease in the percentage of persons needing surgery following an outpatient visit, or a combination of both.

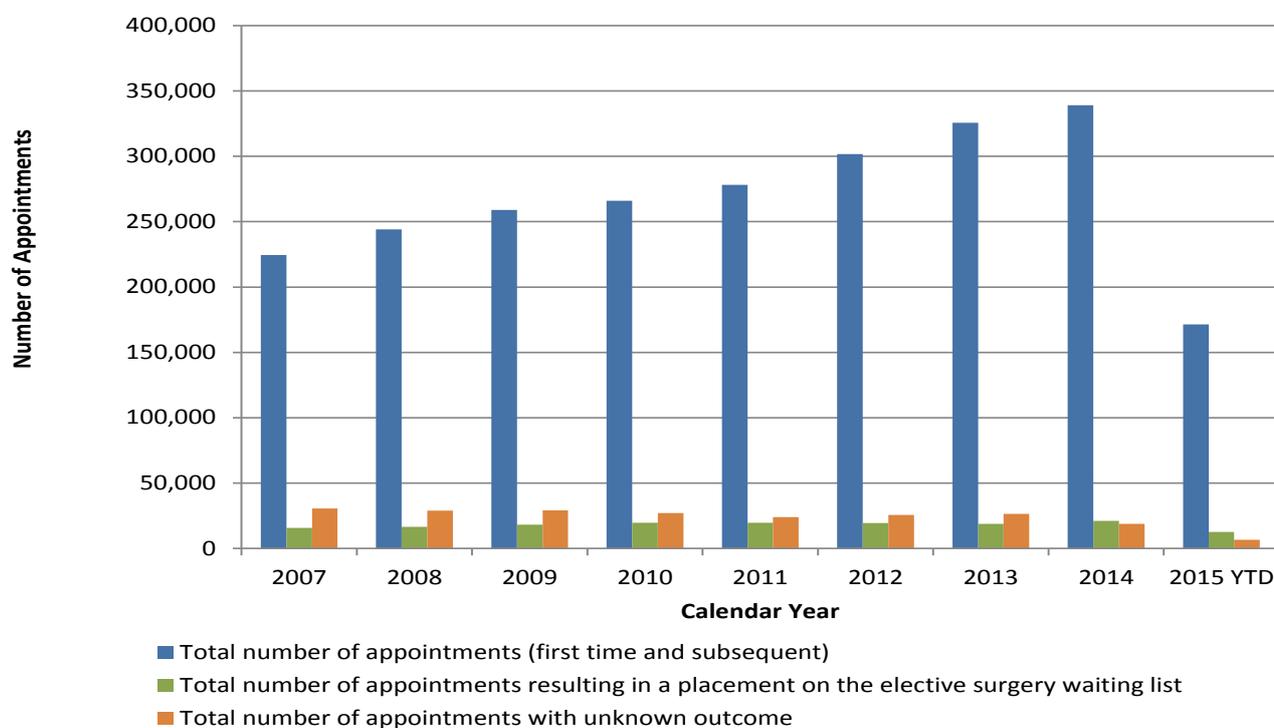
There is still a percentage of appointments with unknown outcomes, although the figure is reducing over time.

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.

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 | 224,520 | 15,763 | 7.0% | 30,519 | 13.6% |
| 2008 | 244,179 | 16,626 | 6.8% | 28,971 | 11.9% |
| 2009 | 259,026 | 18,085 | 7.0% | 29,149 | 11.3% |
| 2010 | 265,978 | 19,542 | 7.3% | 27,135 | 10.2% |
| 2011 | 278,091 | 19,593 | 7.0% | 24,056 | 8.7% |
| 2012 | 301,824 | 19,443 | 6.4% | 25,622 | 8.5% |
| 2013 | 325,678 | 18,852 | 5.8% | 26,446 | 8.1% |
| 2014 | 339,121 | 20,973 | 6.2% | 18,807 | 5.5% |
| 2015 (YTD) | 171,334 | 12,705 | 7.4% | 6,591 | 3.8% |

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



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