

A Mersey Hospital Update

Oncology services expand from three to five days

Thanks to the recruitment of additional staff, Oncology services have increased from three to five days, allowing more patients to be treated locally.

The Oncology Unit underwent a major refit last year with a significant amount of new equipment purchased including; eight new specifically designed chairs for patients to receive their treatment in; privacy curtains; new infusion pumps to administer drips; vital signs monitors; a new fridge to store medication; and a larger TV for patients, as many spend up to six hours in one day receiving treatment.

Overall, the new equipment helps to make the process of receiving treatment at the Mersey much more comfortable for the patients, which is a priority for the hospital.

New wound clinic

A new wound clinic opened at the Mersey Community Hospital in December to give patients with wounds specialised care and reduce the pressure on the Emergency Department. The clinic also reduces the waiting time for these patients who no longer have to wait in the Emergency Department while other patients with more serious injuries or illnesses are treated first.

The clinic is open Mondays and Thursdays and will eventually be moved to the Devonport Community and Health Centre where it's expected to treat approximately 5,000 people per year.

The Emergency Department strengthens

The Emergency Department at the Mersey is going from strength to strength with the appointment of five new nurses and additional equipment purchased.

The hospital now has four new specialised monitors for cardiac patients to enhance monitoring capabilities as well as a new infant resuscitator to provide best practice in the care and resuscitation of babies.

In 2007/08 there were 22,853 presentations to the Department of Emergency.

Eye surgery increase

The amount of eye surgery being conducted at the Mersey Community Hospital has increased by 50 per cent in the past six months with the addition of a new ophthalmic microscope and an additional Ophthalmologist. This has allowed 48 patients per month to receive eye surgery, which is helping to reduce the waiting list.

The list grew significantly in 2007 when the hospital's only ophthalmic microscope broke. The increase in surgery is great news for patients and the community.

New nurse graduates

Mersey Community Hospital welcomed seven new nurse graduates to the team in January. The graduates will be able to take advantage of a comprehensive training program at the hospital which covers all facets of medicine through a fully rotational course. All of the nurses were originally from the North West region and have returned to the coast to take up the appointments.

New technology revolutionises patient care

A new state-of-the-art system is allowing high dependency patients at the Mersey Community Hospital to receive specialist bedside consultation without having to be transferred to the North West Regional Hospital in Burnie.

The VirtualRounds telemedicine system uses high speed broadband and real time video to put specialists from the NWRH in the Mersey's High Dependency Unit.

Approximately 750 people a year are treated in the Mersey's High Dependency Unit. The system is improving regional care for these patients through sophisticated technology by breaking down geographic boundaries and distance. It also provides teaching and training opportunities for medical students and clinical staff.

Staffing boost in HDU

The Mersey's High Dependency Unit now has an additional three specialised nursing staff thanks to a hospital-run post graduate course. Because of the difficulty attracting nurses to such a specialised area, the hospital started the program to 'grow their own' HDU nurses. Four participants recently completed this 16 week course and another program is planned to commence after Easter.

The course allows for staff to learn and train in a supported environment, enabling them to possibly work in the HDU or take the advanced knowledge and skills back to other clinical areas within the hospital.

Sub-acute opening

The Mersey has recently opened a new specialised Sub-Acute Unit to assist with the rehabilitation of patients in a controlled and fun environment. The unit is helping to maximise a person's function and independence in the hospital by engaging a multidisciplinary team, including nurses and allied health staff, to work with patients.

The unit is tailored for patients that no longer need medical treatment but aren't physically ready to return home. Instead of remaining in bed surrounded by other acute patients or being isolated in a single bed room, they are able to socialise and rebuild motor-skills and coordination. The hospital is using modern technology like a Nintendo Wii and a computerised speech system as well as other activities like board games and carpet bowls to enhance the recovery process. With the rehabilitation program lasting four to six weeks per patient, it's expected more than 50 people per year will benefit from the new unit.

Training boost for Mersey

The Mersey Community Hospital Education Department has significantly strengthened and grown over the last 12 months. The hospital now has six Clinical Nurse Educators, a Professional Development/Graduate Coordinator & a Staff Development/Clinical Education Coordinator. The expansion of higher level education practitioners is improving training outcomes for students and new staff by increasing access to expert advice.

The Nursing Education Unit is now also accredited by the Royal College of Nursing, Australia as an APEC provider (authorised provider of endorsed courses).