



Metro North
Hospital and Health Service

File number J15/16795

Mr Mark Furner MP
Chair, Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

Email: jacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Furner

Metro North Hospital and Health Service (MNHHS) delivers health services to all people in Metropolitan Brisbane north of the Brisbane River and as far north as Caboolture and Kilcoy. In addition it provides State-wide specialist health services to patients throughout Queensland and Northern New South Wales. MNHHS encompasses Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital, The Prince Charles Hospital and Redcliffe, Caboolture and Kilcoy Hospitals. MNHHS Emergency Departments currently treat approximately 270,000 patients annually and as the population grows, alcohol fuelled violence continues to be a major concern of all health services particularly those on the front line.

Previous national research based in Emergency Departments (ED) has demonstrated a 10% incidence of ED admissions related primarily to alcohol or drug intoxication. Current Emergency Department Information System data from Metro North Emergency Departments in 2014-15 lists only 2% of presentations with a primary diagnosis of intoxication but it is estimated that another 10% of all presentations are caused primarily by alcohol or drugs but have been catalogued with a primary diagnosis related to the subsequent illness or injury.

Drug and alcohol related admissions to EDs are much more common on Saturday and Sunday with the majority presenting during the afternoon and evening. By comparison patients with alcohol withdrawal present most commonly in the morning. More than 70% of all alcohol and drug related presentations are transported by Queensland Ambulance Service and 20% require inpatient admission.

Over the past decade injuries caused by motor vehicle crashes have continued to fall. Paradoxically presentations to the MNHHS maxillofacial unit responsible for facial trauma management have seen rapidly increasing levels of severe facial trauma due to alcohol fuelled violence. These patients require significant surgical resources which could otherwise be used for the provision of cancer and plastic services to the community of MNHHS.

Occupational violence among health front line staff has become a significant Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) issue. Emergency Departments have a similar scope of practice to other Emergency Services within our community and hence a similar occupational violence profile.

Recording and managing these incidents is still relatively underdeveloped but current data across MNHHS demonstrates the presence of multiple OH&S incidents at each hospital every day, 40% of which are recorded as assaults on staff by patients or their relatives. Many of these incidents are fuelled by alcohol and drugs.

The executive team of MNHHS has made a formal commitment to provide a safe working environment for all MNHHS staff. To achieve this goal a Zero Tolerance Policy will be introduced to ensure rapid protection for staff and a commitment to press charges via the QPS on all patients accused of violence toward health staff.

The high cost of alcohol and drug related injury and illness for all health services has been repeatedly demonstrated within the literature. Violence related injuries both in the community and to frontline emergency staff is simply unacceptable. I would like to formally support all measures included within the 'Tackling Alcohol-fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015' currently before the Queensland Parliament.

Should you wish to discuss this matter in more detail, Associate Professor Dr Colin Myers, Executive Director Critical Care Stream, Metro North Hospital and Health Service would be pleased to assist. He can be contacted on telephone 3139 5721.

Yours sincerely



Shaun Drummond
Acting Chief Executive
Metro North Hospital and Health Service

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