

**Question on Notice
No. 895
Asked on 6 June 2007**

MRS STUCKEY asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to patient services on the Gold Coast—

- (1) How many patients requiring oncology treatment have been forced to travel from the Gold Coast to Brisbane or elsewhere for treatment since August 2005?
- (2) How many referrals for oncology treatment have not received follow-up care due to travel restricting patients accessing treatment facilities and services?
- (3) How many patients have received oncology treatment in Queensland in 2003-04, 2005-06 and 2006-07 (listed individually by hospital facility)?

ANSWER:

- (1) Between August 2005 until February 2006, 69 patients were referred from the Gold Coast Hospital to other public hospitals. A further six patients made the decision to seek medical oncology services privately.

From February 2006 to date, there has been a staged increase in chemotherapy services provided locally at the Gold Coast Hospital for patients who meet certain clinical criteria that ensures patient safety is maximised. The majority of these patients received their initial medical assessment at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and then referred to the Gold Coast Hospital Oncology Day Unit for treatment. Some patients have been able to receive total care locally and these patient numbers continue to increase.

There are currently 67 patients having treatment within the Gold Coast Hospital Oncology Day Unit. Of these, 49 patients are having their total care managed locally and 18 patients are being medically managed at the Princess Alexandra Hospital while having their treatment locally on the Gold Coast.

- (2) There has been no feedback that patients have not received care due to transport difficulties.

Gold Coast patients referred to oncology services are contacted by Cancer Care Coordinators based at the Gold Coast Hospital. The Care Coordinators explain the current referral process and the need for some patients to travel to Brisbane. If patients have difficulties organising transport they are given the following options:

- travel via *The Cancer Council Queensland* free daily bus service to Brisbane (the majority of patients use this option);
- if appointments are unable to be scheduled around the bus service's timetable, a Queensland Health vehicle driven by a *Cancer Council Queensland* bus driver is available;
- patients who elect to organise their own transport are advised of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS); and
- the patient's General Practitioner is also informed of the process and appointment dates at Brisbane hospitals.

(3) Cancer is not just one disease but rather a number of different diseases. In 2004 (the most recent Queensland data available) there were 19,130 new cases of cancer excluding non-melanoma skin cancer. It is estimated that there are currently some 60,000 Queenslanders living with cancer. It is important to note that a proportion of these patients may either be palliative or not requiring active treatment. Cancer is a leading cause of premature death in Queensland. In 2004, a total of 7,071 Queenslanders died from cancer.

Treatment for cancer is quite complex with options that include: surgery; radiation therapy; and chemotherapy (i.e. drugs and other systemic therapies). For many patients, more than one modality of treatment (e.g. surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy) needs to be considered when planning treatment. Not all treatment is delivered at hospitals. Due to the range of treatment options that exist and the different stages of a persons disease, cancer treatment can be delivered across the spectrum of inpatient, ambulatory care, primary health care and community settings.

The data presented reflects the episodes of inpatient care in Queensland Health facilities where the primary coded diagnosis (according to International Classification of Diseases 10-Australian Modification – ICD-10AM) was of cancer or there was a chemotherapy procedure code. Due to the length of the report, only the 30 hospitals with the highest recorded admitted patient episodes of care have been listed with the remaining hospitals data being aggregated. Similarly, private hospital data has also been aggregated and is listed on a separate line. Private hospital names cannot be released due to this information being commercial-in-confidence.

With respect to the attached data a number of issues need to be noted. Firstly, episodes of inpatient care does not equate to the number of patients because patients can receive a range of treatments multiple times in various settings and at different hospitals. Secondly, there is no comprehensive data available for treatment received in non-inpatient settings such as patients receiving treatment in an ambulatory capacity (i.e. non admitted or outpatient clinic services).

ATTACHMENT

Number of admitted patient episodes of care in Queensland acute public and private hospitals where the patient was treated for cancer, 2003-2004 – 2005-2006			
Hospital	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Princess Alexandra	11,096	11,955	13,515
Royal Brisbane and Women's	6,423	6,704	6,493
Gold Coast	7,309	6,252	5,119
Nambour	3,473	4,107	4,316
Cairns	2,680	2,965	3,651
Mater General	7,336	4,181	2,600
Toowoomba	2,654	2,481	2,420
Royal Children's	2,455	2,571	2,363
Townsville	2,526	2,501	2,189
Redcliffe	4,766	2,375	1,880
Mackay	1,293	1,455	1,625
Ipswich	1,490	1,300	1,374
Hervey Bay	1,329	1,242	1,363
Prince Charles	1,598	1,238	1,154
Rockhampton	1,166	1,098	1,067
Logan	870	952	1,045
Bundaberg	1,221	1,186	1,035
Queen Elizabeth II	894	821	933
Gympie	718	797	875
Mater Children's	1,271	1,268	849
Maryborough	804	860	723
Redland	551	589	664
Caboolture	596	556	543
Atherton	633	611	532
Mater Mother's	294	369	461
Gladstone	272	256	365
Caloundra	359	397	314
Mount Isa	317	249	270
Warwick	138	169	243
Innisfail	250	219	215
Public Facilities (combined outside top 30)	3,392	3,673	3,235
Total (for public hospitals)	70,174	65,397	63,431
Private Hospitals (combined)	107,647	115,578	124,850
TOTAL	177,821	180,975	188,281

Note that "cancer" treatment is defined here as having a principal diagnosis in the ICD10-AM range C00-D48, or Z51.0, or Z51.1.

Source: Queensland Hospital Admitted Patient Data Collection