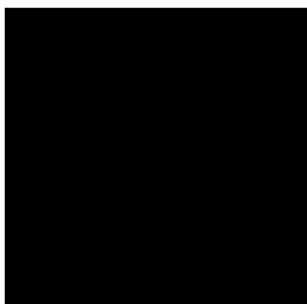




01 June 2022



OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST - EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT WAIT TIMES

Thank you for your recent request, received on 13 May 2022, seeking information under the Official Information Act 1982. This enquiry relates to Emergency Department wait times at Waikato Hospital.

You have requested the following information:

1. *Records of the decision being made not to see patients from the waiting room for 10 hours on the evening of 12 May 2022.*

At no point on the evening was there a decision made not to see patients. We apologise that this announcement was made in the waiting area of the Emergency Department. This should not have occurred and we have spoken to the team to ensure this does not happen again.

At times of high presentations nursing staff may advise that wait times are higher than normal, and this will predominantly affect those non-acute or non-urgent patients, but there is never a decision made not to see patients. All patients are seen on arrival and triaged to determine their complexity and urgency for care. Patients are seen and treated in as timely a manner as possible. We will at times advise patients who do not require emergency care to consider a more appropriate provider option to avoid an extended wait time as we prioritise those urgent and acute patients.

2. *Policies in place to ensure that serious harm does not occur to patients during the waiting time.*

There is no policy directly related to wait times in the Emergency Department, but there are processes in place that involve the department and whole of hospital in response to managing demand.

Emergency Department performance is monitored throughout the day. This includes numbers of patients in department, time to be seen and also the time to admit to hospital where required. Hospital-wide meetings occur at several points during the day to manage demand. An escalation process with documented actions supports this.

The Emergency Department at Waikato DHB has a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in place. This has actions for the department itself, and also actions for the wider organisation. The aim of this SOP is to ensure there are accountabilities and actions that occur on a daily basis to ensure that patients are safe and are seen in as timely a manner as possible.

This involves the Emergency Department Nurse- in-Charge, Physician-in-Charge, the Integrated Operations Centre and Specialty Inpatient teams. Actions are triggered as numbers of patients presenting increase or decrease; this can be from as low as 10 patients in the department up 100 in the department.

3. Policies for making the decision to not see patients for the equivalent of an entire shift.

As per the response to question 1, all patients are seen and triaged on arrival. There is a never a decision made not to see patients.

4. Statistics regarding the making of an announcement has been made to the effect that patients will not be seen for an entire shift such as how often such an announcement has been made so far in May 2022, and by month for 2022 and 2021.

There have been no instances of patients not being seen during an entire shift.

5. Wait time statistics for the emergency department, including mean, mode and range and broken down by shift.

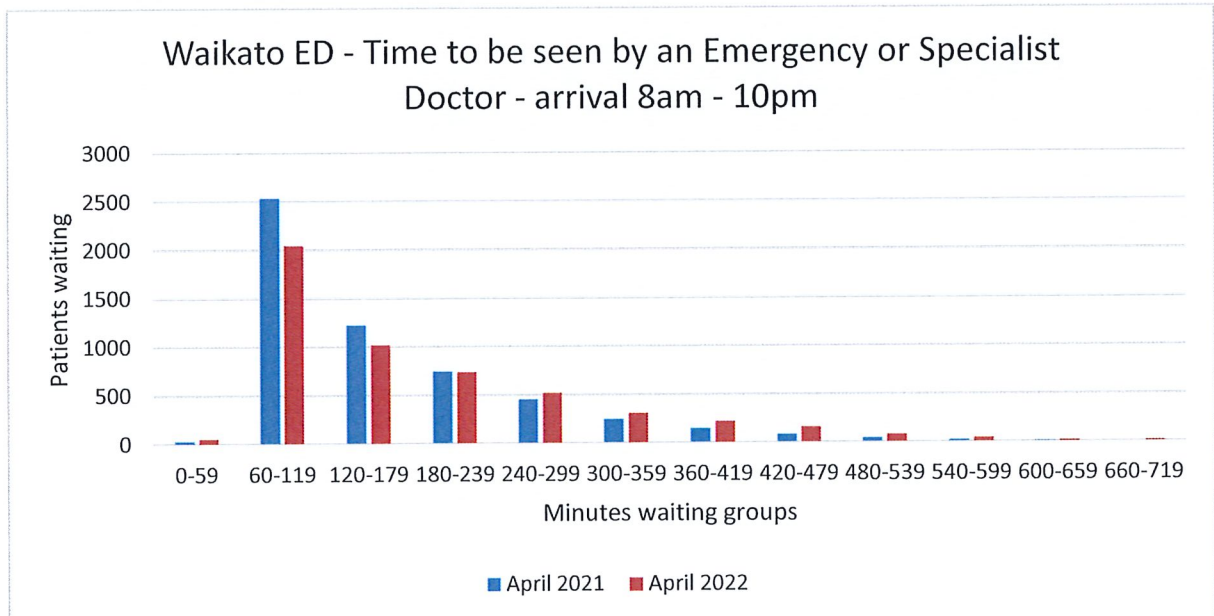
The following covers the period April 2021 to April 2022.

Ninety nine percent of patients are triaged and seen within 10 minutes.

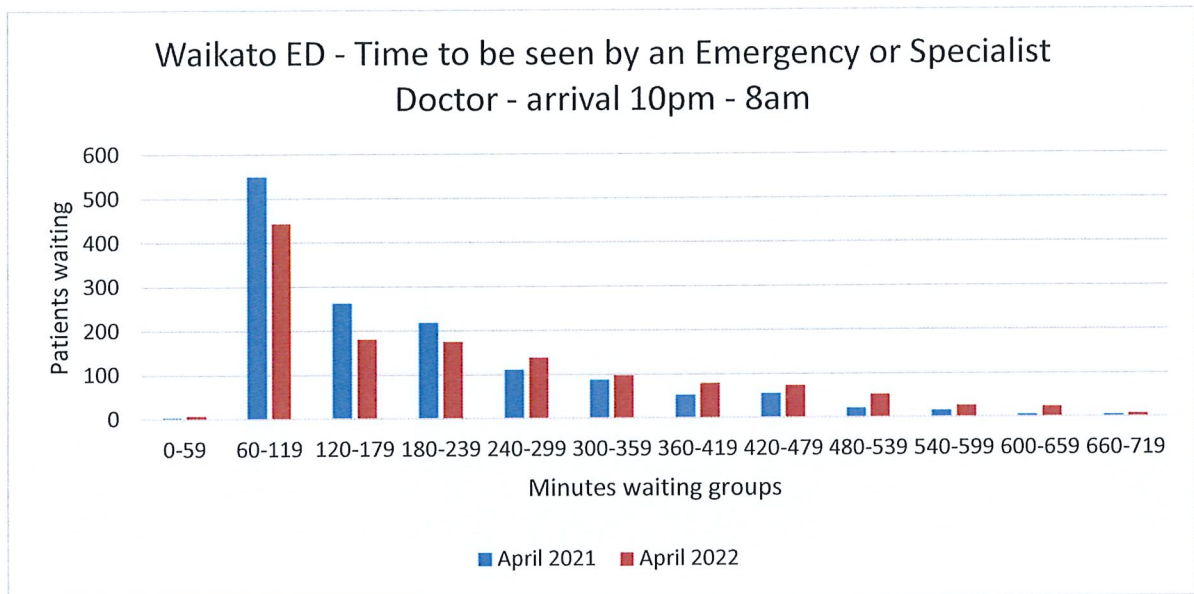
Whilst initial care and monitoring is undertaken by a registered nurse, clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner, the following table provides wait times for a patient to be seen by an emergency or specialist doctor. The Ministry of Health set a target of three hours for this to occur. Whilst this is achieved the majority of time, there are occasions when high demand all at once will mean that some lower triage patients will take longer to be seen by a doctor.

The below tables describe the number of patients waiting to be seen by an emergency or specialist doctor by minute groups. Patients will have been triaged by a nurse on arrival.

Arrival between 8am and 10pm



Arrival between 10pm and 8am



6. Numbers of patients who have had their condition worsened by delays in ED and a list of the adverse outcomes that have resulted

Point 6 of this request is being declined under Section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information does not exist.

Waikato DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publically funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

You have the right to request the Ombudsman investigate and review the DHB's decision. The Ombudsman's postal address is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsmen
P O Box 10-152
WELLINGTON

I hope this information is of help to you.

Yours sincerely

Christine Lowry
Executive Director - Hospital and Community Services
Waikato District Health Board