



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

REFERRALS TO PUBLIC OUTPATIENT SURGICAL CLINICS

June 2014



Delivering a **Healthy WA**

Date issued: 10 October 2014

© Department of Health, Western Australia

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced without prior written permission from the Department of Health, Western Australia.

Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be directed to -

Performance Reporting Branch
Resourcing & Performance Division
Department of Health, Western Australia
PO Box 8172 Perth Business Centre
Western Australia 6849

A list of the Department's publications concerning outpatient activity is available from -
www.health.wa.gov.au/ElectiveSurgery/waitinglist/

ISSN 1836-9677 (print)

Suggested citation

Department of Health, Western Australia.

Referrals to Public Outpatient Surgical Clinics: June 2014.

Perth: Performance Reporting Branch, Resourcing & Performance Division

Department of Health, 2014.

Report produced by

Performance Reporting Branch, Resourcing & Performance Division,

Department of Health.

Copies of this publication available at:

www.health.wa.gov.au/ElectiveSurgery/waitinglist/

AT A GLANCE*

- As at the end of June 2014 there were 64,210 referrals waiting to be seen at surgical outpatient clinics for a first appointment (for further details see page 5 and 6).
- Outpatient demand increased by 3.2% from June 2013 to June 2014, with waiting times increasing by 0.53 months. Overall median waiting time is below the 6 month target set by Government (for further details, see Section 2).
- The median wait time for those patients who have had their first appointments has increased from 0.82 months in June 2013 to 0.89 months in June 2014.
- Of the 165,734 total appointments for the 2014 YTD calendar year only 6.1% resulted in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list, and a further 7.0% 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
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 now excludes referrals identified for long term management of patients and Dermatology, as these referrals are not considered surgical at this 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.

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Information on referrals to public outpatient clinics	1
1.2	Information in this report	1
2.	Referrals waiting to be seen	3
2.1	Waiting time (in months) for referrals	3
2.2	Number of referrals	5
3.	Referrals that have been seen	7
3.1	Waiting time (in months) to the first appointment	7
3.2	Number of referrals	9
3.3	Outpatient appointment outcomes	11

List of Tables

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	4
Table 2:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment.....	6
Table 3:	Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment	8
Table 4:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment.....	10
Table 5:	Outcomes of outpatient appointments at public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals	12

List of Figures

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	3
Figure 2:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment.....	5
Figure 3:	Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment	7
Figure 4:	Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment.....	9
Figure 5:	Outcomes of outpatient appointments at public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals	12

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 overall waiting times should take into consideration patients referred to private specialist services by their GP or other health care provider. Data pertaining to waiting times to private specialist services is not currently available.

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 Australia 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 2014, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 5.92 months, which is an increase of 0.53 months (or 9.8%) compared with the median waiting time in June 2013 of 5.39 months and an increase of 0.50 months compared to June 2007. Although this measure had decreased to 3.88 months by December 2008, the figure rose steadily, again peaking in December 2012 to 5.85 months.

For referrals that are yet to have a first appointment at Royal Perth Hospital Wellington Street Campus and Fremantle Hospital, the median waiting time never exceeded six months. 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 and June 2014. 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 eight out of the fifteen 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

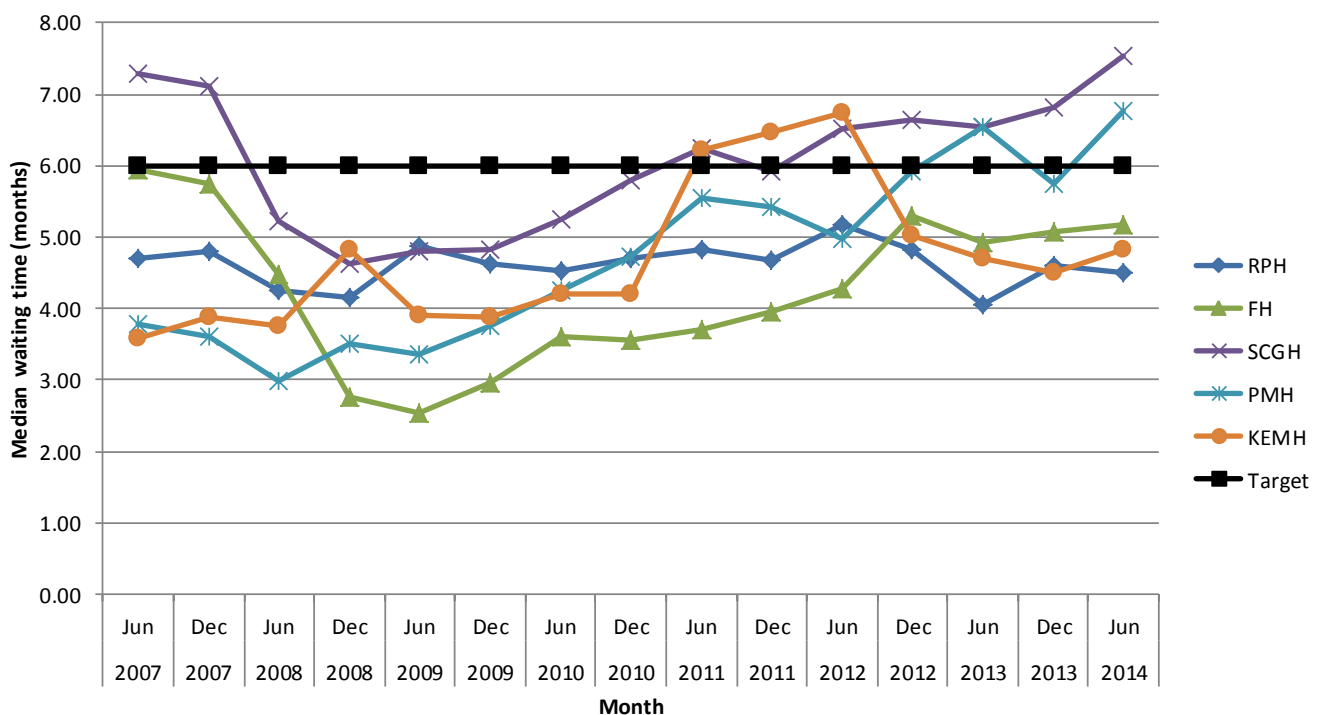


Table 1: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment

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	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	4.70	5.95	7.30	3.78	3.58	5.42
December 2007	4.80	5.75	7.10	3.62	3.88	5.29
June 2008	4.24	4.47	5.23	2.99	3.75	4.27
December 2008	4.14	2.76	4.64	3.52	4.83	3.88
June 2009	4.87	2.53	4.80	3.35	3.91	3.91
December 2009	4.64	2.96	4.83	3.75	3.88	3.98
June 2010	4.54	3.62	5.26	4.26	4.21	4.37
December 2010	4.70	3.55	5.79	4.73	4.21	4.67
June 2011	4.83	3.72	6.25	5.56	6.21	5.03
December 2011	4.67	3.95	5.92	5.42	6.48	5.13
June 2012	5.16	4.27	6.51	4.96	6.74	5.33
December 2012	4.83	5.29	6.64	5.92	5.03	5.85
June 2013	4.04	4.93	6.54	6.54	4.70	5.39
December 2013	4.60	5.06	6.81	5.75	4.50	5.65
June 2014	4.50	5.16	7.53	6.77	4.83	5.92

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 2014, the number of referrals yet to be seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 64,210, which is an increase of 1,973 (or 3.2%) compared to the 62,237 referrals in June 2013 and a 24,674 (or 62.4%) increase in referrals compared to the 39,536 referrals recorded in June 2007.

Since June 2007, approximately 42% of the increase in referral numbers were to clinics at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, although this increase has moderated since June 2013 to only 200 more referrals to this site.

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

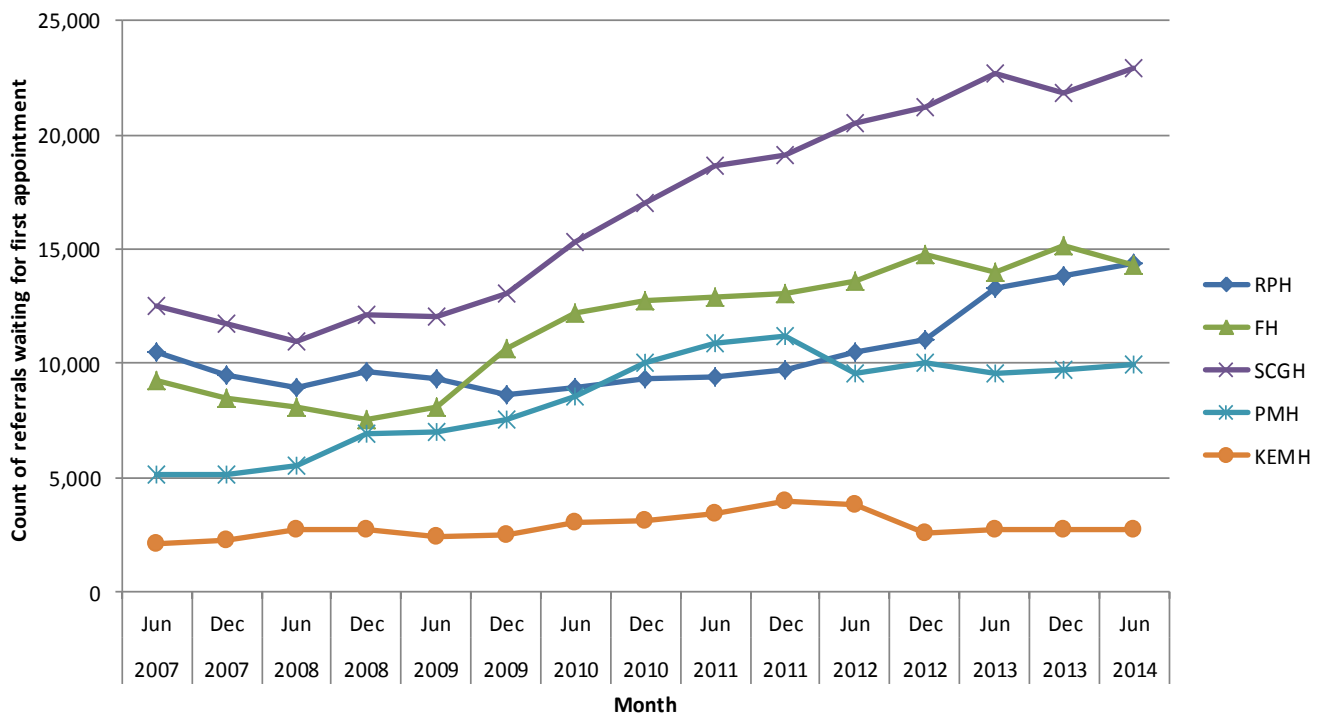


Table 2: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals yet to be seen for a first appointment

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	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	10,533	9,266	12,488	5,167	2,082	39,536
December 2007	9,479	8,446	11,749	5,155	2,231	37,060
June 2008	8,975	8,119	10,939	5,548	2,699	36,280
December 2008	9,627	7,544	12,126	6,944	2,724	38,965
June 2009	9,323	8,115	12,068	6,964	2,450	38,920
December 2009	8,597	10,665	13,089	7,577	2,503	42,431
June 2010	8,956	12,230	15,318	8,582	3,054	48,140
December 2010	9,324	12,759	17,032	10,029	3,080	52,224
June 2011	9,433	12,875	18,665	10,895	3,417	55,285
December 2011	9,721	13,043	19,147	11,185	3,945	57,041
June 2012	10,494	13,628	20,550	9,536	3,824	58,032
December 2012	11,036	14,771	21,191	9,997	2,599	59,594
June 2013	13,280	13,991	22,700	9,539	2,727	62,237
December 2013	13,860	15,143	21,828	9,705	2,727	63,263
June 2014	14,384	14,310	22,900	9,921	2,695	64,210

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 2014, the median waiting time at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 0.89 months, which is an increase of 0.07 months (or 8.0%) compared with the median waiting time in June 2013 of 0.82 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 around 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

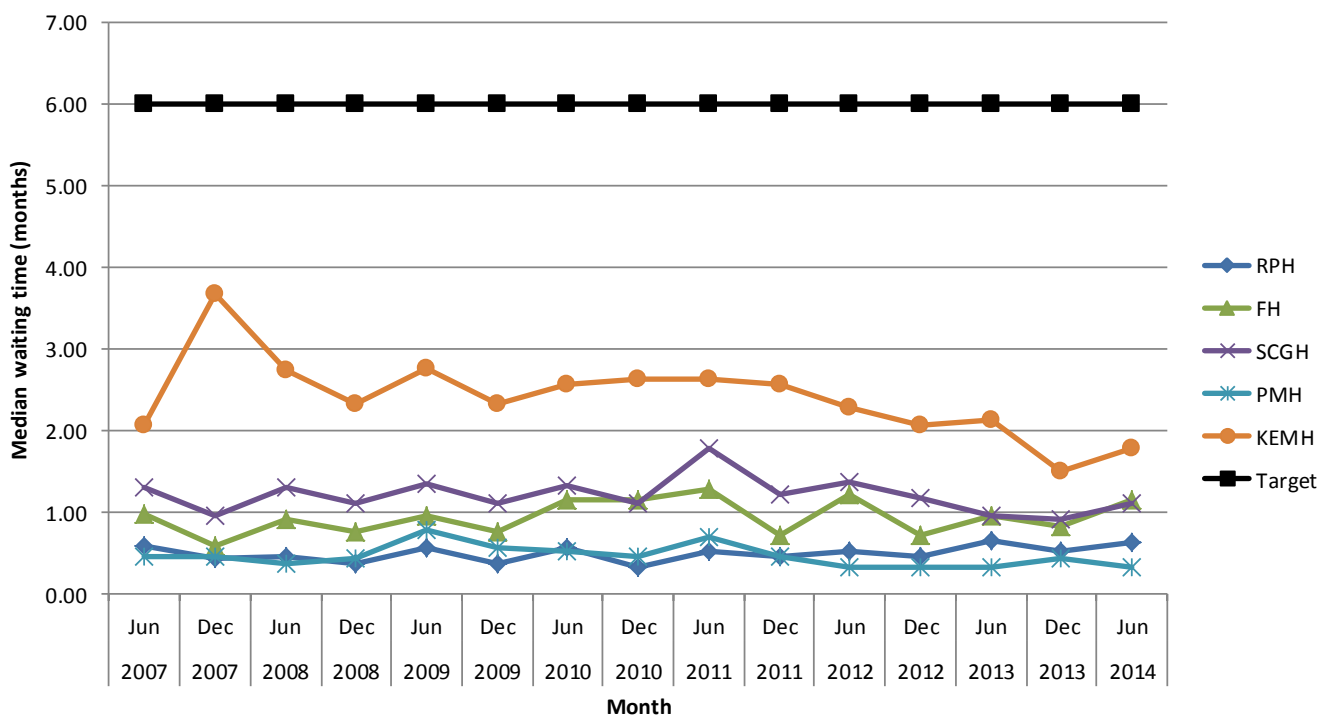


Table 3: Median waiting time (in months) for referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment

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	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	0.79	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	0.69	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	0.69
June 2013	0.66	0.95	0.95	0.33	2.14	0.82
December 2013	0.53	0.82	0.92	0.43	1.51	0.69
June 2014	0.62	1.15	1.12	0.33	1.78	0.89

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 2014, the number of referrals that have been seen at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 9,318, which is an increase of 137 (or 1.5%) compared to the 9,181 referrals in June 2013, and over 50% more than the number of referrals seen in June 2007. This is an average annual growth rate of 6.2%, 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

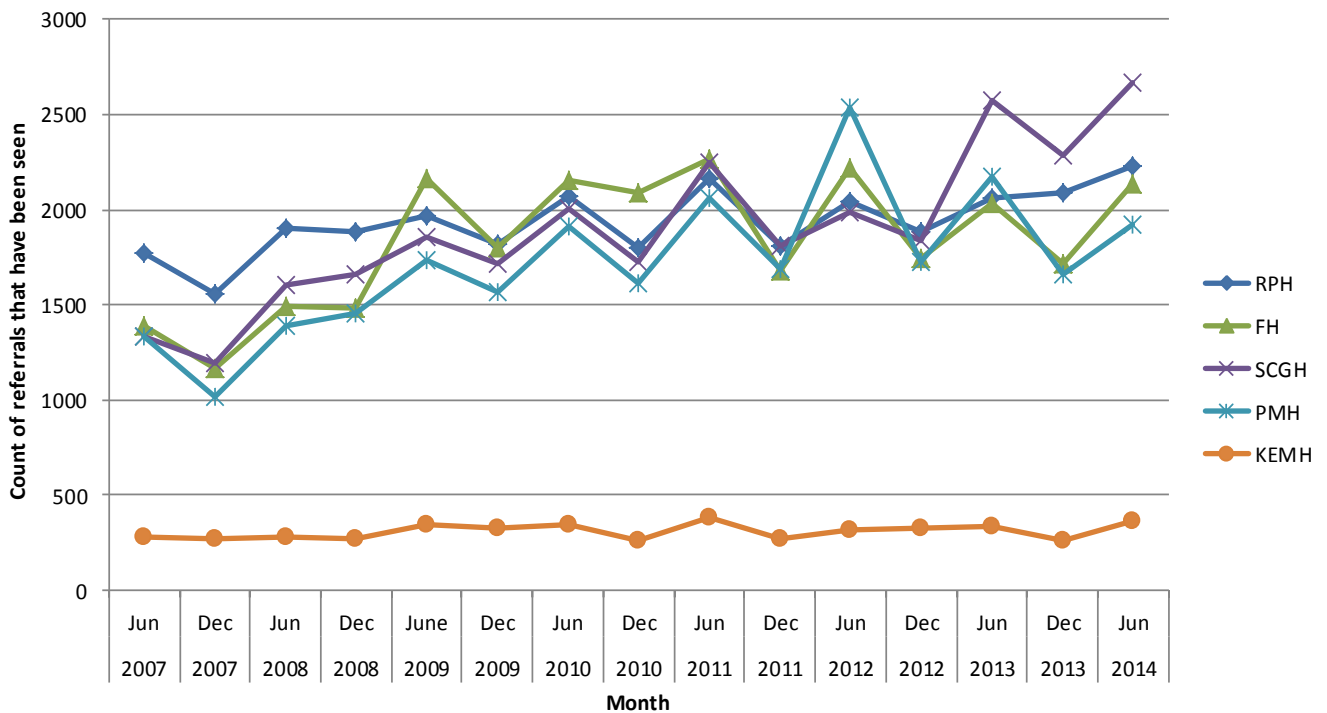


Table 4: Number of referrals to a public outpatient surgical clinic at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first appointment

Month of appointment	Adult Tertiary Hospitals			Princess Margaret Hospital for Children	King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital	Fremantle Hospital	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
June 2007	1,772	1,394	1,338	1,334	279	6,117
December 2007	1,556	1,169	1,190	1,020	275	5,210
June 2008	1,899	1,491	1,607	1,392	284	6,673
December 2008	1,883	1,480	1,659	1,456	270	6,748
June 2009	1,970	2,162	1,857	1,739	346	8,074
December 2009	1,823	1,803	1,716	1,567	330	7,239
June 2010	2,067	2,156	2,008	1,915	345	8,491
December 2010	1,797	2,089	1,721	1,614	266	7,487
June 2011	2,164	2,266	2,244	2,059	379	9,112
December 2011	1,814	1,682	1,810	1,691	273	7,270
June 2012	2,041	2,220	1,985	2,536	320	9,102
December 2012	1,888	1,747	1,839	1,729	331	7,534
June 2013	2,061	2,031	2,575	2,173	341	9,181
December 2013	2,093	1,717	2,282	1,663	259	8,014
June 2014	2,225	2,137	2,666	1,923	367	9,318

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 figure of 5.8% 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.

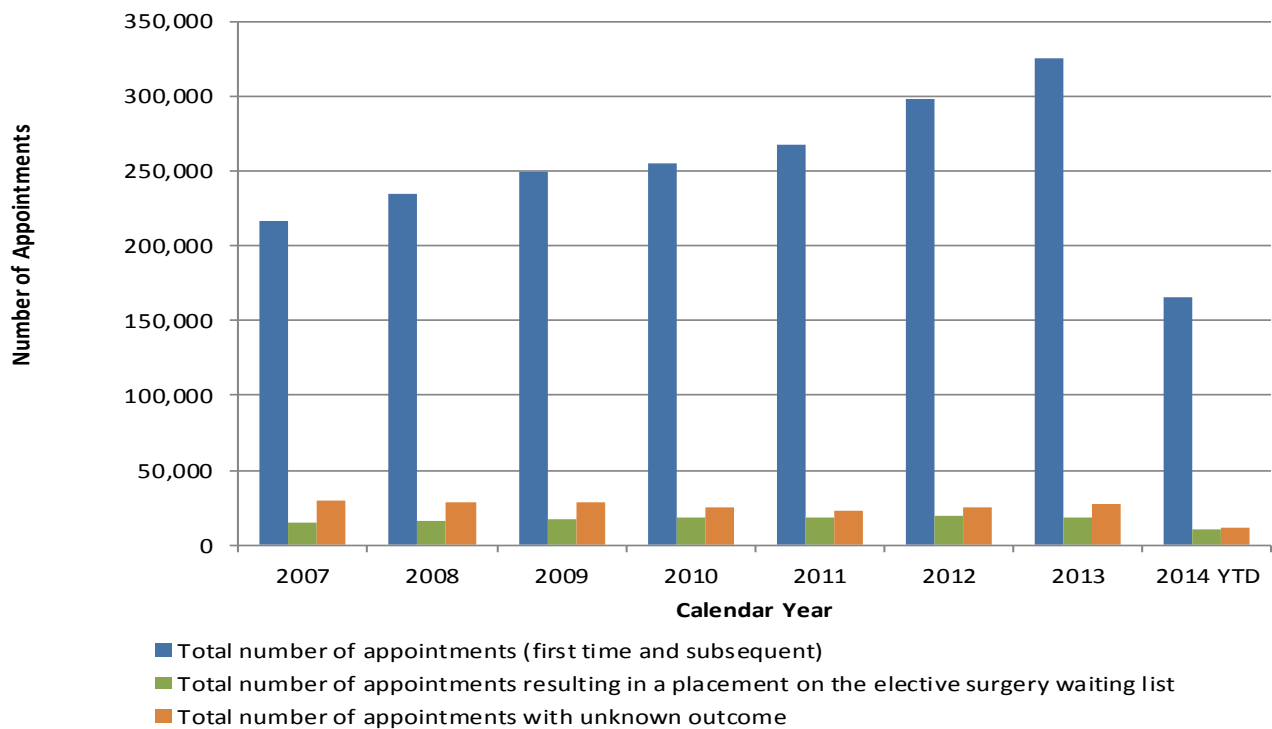
There is still a significant percentage of appointments with unknown outcomes, although the figure is reducing over time.

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	216,581	15,097	7.0%	29,998	13.9%
2008	235,049	15,745	6.7%	28,588	12.2%
2009	249,448	17,403	7.0%	28,337	11.4%
2010	255,421	18,570	7.3%	25,616	10.0%
2011	267,086	18,420	6.9%	22,732	8.5%
2012	297,554	19,246	6.5%	25,375	8.5%
2013	325,116	18,851	5.8%	27,172	8.4%
2014 YTD	165,734	10,172	6.1%	11,535	7.0%

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



This page has intentionally been left blank



This document can be made available
in alternative formats on request for
a person with a disability.