



Blood test boon

By **KERRIE O'CONNOR**

EMERGENCY staff will have blood test results for seriously ill patients in seconds, thanks to hand-held devices distributed this week to Eurobodalla hospitals.

The devices mean Moruya and Bay patients will for the first time have access to fast 24-hour pathology testing, with instant results for several emergency conditions.

Until now, Moruya patients falling ill in the middle of the night had to wait for Moruya Hospital's laboratory to be reopened and a pathologist called in.

At any time of day, Batemans Bay patients had to wait for their samples to be driven to Moruya for testing, a process that could take hours.

Heart attack, stroke patients and those with serious infections will be among patients to benefit from the machines.

Emergency staff previously could test for the presence of the heart attack marker, troponin, in a patient's blood, but not measure it.

The new machine can measure levels of troponin and will also test patients suspected of suffering sepsis.

A sister device will determine quickly how thin the blood of a suspected stroke victim is.

Both devices will instantly upload results to patients' records.

Delivering the machines yesterday to both emergency departments was NSW Health Pathology's project manager Andrew Sargeant.

He said the NSW Health and Pathology West project would speed up treatment.

"Treatment can commence straight away," he said.

"Both devices will facilitate quicker decision-making, in the case of patient transfers.

"They may help the clinicians rule out certain conditions that may have otherwise resulted in the patient being transferred.

"They are designed perfectly for country areas, where there is a delay in transporting pathology samples to be tested."

Welcoming the delivery yesterday to Batemans Bay Hospital's emergency department were visiting medical officer Dr Luigi De Frenza and registered nurse Viv Chapman.

"Instant results mean quicker treatment and management plans for the patients and they reduce the risk of adverse complications," Dr De Frenza said.

He said the equipment would save funds.

"It is an expensive process, going down to Moruya after hours," he said.

"We will no longer have to get the pathologist in. It is better for our population and their treatment."

Lisa Kennedy, Eurobodalla Health Service general manager, said that until now hardcopy print-

outs of results had to be entered manually into a patient's record.

"Having these new point-of-care devices within the emergency department means results are available in real time electronically, so we have the most up-to-date information on the status of the patient," Ms Kennedy said.

"It's always safest when the patient's details are in one consolidated record.

"We can make quicker clinical decisions and improve time to treatment.

"It also means our nursing staff is saving time in record keeping and can direct more of their efforts into patient care."



QUICK TIME: Hand-held devices that give blood test results in seconds are good news for Batemans Bay Hospital's emergency nurse Viv Chapman, Dr Luigi De Frenza and NSW Health's Andrew Sargeant.