



ED patients to benefit from pathology program

SINGLETON District Hospital has introduced a new point of care testing program that will give emergency department (ED) patients faster access to pathology results – and improve overall care.

NSW Health Pathology is leading the state-wide effort to introduce the managed point of care testing (PoCT) scheme in public hospital emergency departments that don't have access to 24-hour pathology laboratories on-site.

The aim is to provide ED teams, particularly in regional and rural areas, with access to on-the-spot results for certain types of pathology tests so they can deliver more timely care for patients.

Hunter-New England Local Health District is the latest to adopt the program and worked with Pathology North (one of five NSW Health Pathology Networks) to introduce 31 devices across 28 emergency departments.

Singleton District Hospital introduced one new device and upgraded an existing device to support patient care.

The hand-held PoCT devices provide on-site analysis for blood gases, lactate, haemoglobin, troponin, chemistries

and electrolytes and INR/PT (blood coagulation tests) – some of the most common pathology tests emergency department teams rely on.

Health service manager Wendy Mason-Jones said the staff at Singleton District Hospital had been using the new PoCT devices since July – and found them a value-add for patient care.

“By having reliable point of care devices within the ED, we can get faster results for certain pathology tests, which means we can make quicker clinical decisions and improve time to treatment,” she said.

“We can also save travel time for some patients; and that's something they really appreciate.”

Director for Pathology North (the NSW Health Pathology network that services the Hunter-New England LHD) Dr Stephen Braye said point of care testing contributed to better health care by significantly reducing turnaround time for some types of pathology tests.

“Point of care testing has advanced to a stage that we can now bring some parts of the laboratory to the patient,” he explained.

“The technology complements the work of our traditional laboratories, which continue to perform more detailed analysis and more technically advanced tests.”

Dr Braye said clinical teams would be able to have confidence in the PoCT results as the hand-held devices would be managed to the same quality standards as other NSW Health Pathology laboratory instruments.

The state-wide PoCT pathology rollout has been funded through a \$5 million grant from the COAG's National Partnerships Agreement Emergency Department capital program.

IN addition to providing PoCT devices for small EDs, the program also includes:

- Training for ED staff to ensure the devices are used properly;
- Technical support and ongoing monitoring for devices; and
- Software that will enable results to be electronically transmitted to pathology laboratory information systems and ultimately to a patient's electronic medical records.



back



NEW INITIATIVE: Point of care testing (PoCT) manager Andrew Sargeant and Singleton District Hospital clinical nurse specialist Bridget Moberg try out the program on patient Peta Cooper.

Pic: ROD THOMPSON