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**RANDWICK**

# Technology rollout will help flu war

**Rebecca Franks**

RAPID flu testing technology will be rolled out at Randwick's Prince of Wales Hospital to reduce the diagnosis time from four days to a few hours.

The advanced testing program will allow clinicians to make faster triage and testing decisions which is crucial as antiviral treatments are most effective when started in less than two days from the onset of influenza.

For the elderly and high-risk patients including those with cancer, diabetes or heart disease, faster diagnosis could save lives.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the program – which will be rolled out at 23 hospitals across NSW – was the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

“Influenza comes at a high cost to our communities, hospitals and economy, especially in seasonal outbreaks,” she said.

“For the most vulnerable ... this infectious virus can cause serious complications and even death.

“Having real-time diagnostic testing in our public hospitals will help save time, resources and lives.”

Flu reports are up 50 per cent in NSW compared to this time last year, the most common type being influenza A (H3N2), while most of Australia is yet to enter peak flu season which traditionally runs from August to September.

Director of public health pathology Dominic Dwyer, said rapid diagnosis would be an important tool in the frontline war on influenza.