



## **Rise in appendicectomies at Westmead**

**Friday 21 September, 2012**

Emergency appendicectomies at the The Children's Hospital at Westmead more than doubled between 1999 and 2009 despite a population increase of only 1.6%, an article in the latest issue of the *ANZ Journal of Surgery* states.

The authors performed a retrospective chart review on all appendicectomies performed at the hospital in the years 1999 and 2009. A total of 486 cases were included in the study, 159 in 1999, and 328 in 2009.

There was also an increase in the number of patients transferred from other hospitals, up from 19.8% to 39.5%, leading to a huge load increase for the hospital.

Co-author Professor Andrew Holland said the increase in the number of cases was extraordinary given the modest increase in population, and that the increase is more likely a reflection of change in referral patterns.

NSW Health guidelines state that children aged 5 to 12 years can be treated at either an adult or a children's hospital.

"These results show a clear discordance between current health guidelines and the realities of a dramatically increased emergency surgical workload at our institution," Professor Holland said.

Professor Holland said there could be a number of reasons for the imbalance, from medico-legal unease to a lack of confidence on the part of General Surgery trainees.

"Though more pragmatically, these transfers incur no financial penalty to the referring institution, promoting policies that shift the costs and workload elsewhere," he said.

Surgeries took six minutes longer in 2009 than 1999 because of laparoscopic techniques, however the length of stay of patients reduced by around one and half days. The average age of the patients also increased by a year.

"In the absence of an increase in Paediatric Surgeons, there needs to be some facilitation of the provision of basic surgical care for children at local hospitals," Professor Holland said

"This should be alongside appropriate support for our General Surgery colleagues to maintain skills in basic Paediatric Surgery."

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, now in its 80th year and published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN  
COLLEGE OF SURGEONS



**Media inquiries: Bridget Hooper, Media & Public Relations Officer  
0437 008 891 or (03) 9276 7430**