



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **The Acute Surgical Unit: a new model of care**

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The traditional on-call system for the management of acute general surgical admissions is inefficient and outdated, and should be replaced by a new model – the Acute Surgical Unit (ASU) – according to an article in the latest issue of the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*.

The article, written by a surgical team at Sydney's Nepean Hospital, asserts that the on-call system, involving consultants being on-call for emergencies while performing their routine daily work, leads to the ad-hoc management of patients and is based on the incorrect premise that the emergency workload is unpredictable. In fact, the emergency surgery workload is “entirely predictable”.

The Nepean team based their model on a new, consultant led model of care for the management of the acute general surgical patient developed at Sydney's Prince of Wales Hospital, modifying it to meet the demands of the local workload and environment.

The ASU, as developed at Nepean Hospital in 2006, is a consultant driven, independent unit that manages all acute general surgical admissions. The team has the same make up seven days a week and functions the same every day including weekends and public holidays. The consultant does a 24 hour period of on-call, from 7pm to 7pm. They are on remote call from 7pm to 7am and are in the hospital from 7am to 7pm with their sole responsibility being to the ASU. The ASU has a day team with two registrars, two residents and a nurse practitioner.

All patients are admitted and stay in the ASU until discharge or transfer to other units. Handover of the patients at the end of each day is facilitated by a comprehensive ASU database.

The implementation of the ASU at Nepean Hospital has improved the timing of assessment by the surgical unit. There has been significant improvement in the timing of operative management, with an increased number and proportion of cases being done during day light hours, with an associated reduction in the proportion of cases performed after-hours.

The authors also conclude that there is greater Trainee supervision with regard to patient assessment, management and operative procedures. The ASU provides an excellent training opportunity for surgical trainees, residents and interns in the assessment and management of acute surgical conditions.

There has also been an improvement in the consultants' work conditions.

*ANZ Journal of Surgery*, established more than 70 years 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.

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