

GASTROENTEROLOGY SERVICES

CHAPTER 26

Gastroenterology is a broad discipline encompassing endoscopy and hepatology. Patients with gastrointestinal bleeding and biliary sepsis are a significant proportion of the caseload. In a future network these should be triaged to the tertiary sites of Bankstown and Liverpool. In addition, the service provides input to patients who require enteral feeding or stenting for palliation.

The prevalence of some gastroenterological and hepatological diseases is significantly higher for SWS residents. For example, although comprising 3.5% of the Australian population, 25% of notifications for Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C were from SWS residents.

Statistics from NSW Health separately identify gastroenterology and hepatology from diagnostic gastrointestinal (GI) endoscopy; both are included in this discussion.

Gastroenterology patients are seen at all six SWSAHS hospitals. In 2002/03, SWSAHS was 82% self-sufficient in public sector gastroenterology, providing a total of 3,717 separations and 13,205 beddays. Most resident outflows were to Westmead, Auburn and Concord Hospitals. For public sector diagnostic GI endoscopy, SWSAHS was 87% self-sufficient, providing a total of 6,185 separations and 8,076 beddays. Most adult resident outflows were to Concord, St George and Royal Prince Alfred Hospitals.

In 2002/03, the private sector provided 19% of gastroenterology separations and 62% of diagnostic GI separations generated by adult SWS residents.

At a planned occupancy of 85% and assuming no change in flows, it is projected that adult gastroenterology services in SWSAHS Hospitals will increase by 8% to 2006 and a further 12% to 2011. Similarly, for adult diagnostic GI Services, the forecast is for a 25% increase in Diagnostic GI Endoscopy, and another 18% increase to 2011.

Demand by SWS residents for gastroenterology is projected to grow by 8.0% to 2006 and a further 12.6% to 2011 and for diagnostic GI endoscopy to rise by 24.5% and another 18.0% for 2006 and 2011 respectively.

Current Services

Bankstown Hospital

The Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology provides a tertiary level service to acute and ambulatory inpatients, with oncall offered for consultations to other departments and for urgent after-hours matters. Medical staff comprises one Academic (Professor), one Staff Specialist and three VMOs, supported by two advanced trainee registrars, one junior registrar (1.0 FTE) and one junior medical officer (1.0 FTE). Ten allocated endoscopy lists per week are undertaken by gastroenterologists; surgeons also perform endoscopy lists. A multidisciplinary team has been developed to support patients with liver disease. In 2002/03, there were 1,090 gastroenterology separations, including 42% day only, occupying 4,154 beddays at an average LOS of 3.81 days. For diagnostic GI Endoscopy, with a day only rate of 92%, there were 1,954 separations and 2,430 beddays, resulting in an average LOS of 1.2 days.

Fairfield Hospital

Routine endoscopy, including ERCP, is provided by one VMO gastroenterologist during one list per week. A variety of general physicians and general surgeons provide a limited upper endoscopy and colonoscopy service. In 2002/03, there were 565 gastroenterology separations, of which 26% were day only, occupying 2,173 beddays at an average LOS of 3.85 days. For diagnostic GI Endoscopy, the day only rate was 89% and there were 564 separations and 883 beddays, for an average LOS of 1.6 days.

Liverpool Hospital

The Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology provides a tertiary level service to acute and ambulatory inpatients, with oncall offered for consultations to other departments and for urgent after-hours matters. Medical staff comprises two Staff Specialists and two VMOs, supported by two advanced trainee registrars and one junior medical officer. Weekly, 4.5 endoscopy lists are undertaken by gastroenterologists; surgeons also perform endoscopy lists. A multidisciplinary team, made up of social worker, nurse, dietitian and psychologist, has been developed to support patients with liver disease. In 2002/03, there were 916 gastroenterology separations, including 30% day only, occupying 4,063 beddays at an Average LOS of 4.4 days. For diagnostic GI Endoscopy, the day only rate was 89%, with 1,696 separations and 2,511 beddays for an Average LOS of 1.5 days.

Campbelltown Hospital

Two VMO gastroenterologists provide consultation services at Campbelltown Hospital, in conjunction with Camden Hospital. An acute endoscopy service operates at Campbelltown Hospital and hepatitis patients are seen in VMO rooms. Across Campbelltown and Camden Hospitals, 4.5 lists per week are performed. In 2002/03, there were 518 gastroenterology separations, of which 13% were day only, occupying 2,002 beddays at an average LOS of 3.9 days. For diagnostic GI Endoscopy, with a day only rate of 28%, there were 71 separations and 238 beddays, for an average LOS of 3.4 days.

Camden Hospital

Two VMO gastroenterologists provide consultation services at Camden Hospital, in conjunction with Campbelltown Hospital. The ambulatory endoscopy service at Camden is performed in Day Surgery, as part of 4.5 lists per week done across Campbelltown and Camden Hospitals. In 2002/03, there were 341 gastroenterology separations, of which 74% were day only, occupying 502 beddays at an average LOS of 1.5 days. For diagnostic GI Endoscopy, with a day only rate of 99%, there were 1,425 separations and 1,535 beddays resulting in an average LOS of 1.1 days.

Bowral Hospital

In 2002/03, there were 287 gastroenterology separations, of which 81% were day only, occupying 311 beddays at an average LOS of 1.1 days. For diagnostic GI endoscopy, the day only rate was 99%, with 475 separations and 479 beddays, for an average LOS of 1.01 days.

Non-inpatient

There are dedicated clinics for people with Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C at Bankstown Hospital and at Liverpool Hospital, where medical staff are supported by specialist nursing staff employed by the Public Health Unit specifically to provide treatment to hepatitis patients. Gastroenterology clinics are held at Liverpool Hospital and at Bankstown Hospital.

Research and Teaching

There is an affiliation, under the title of SWAGS (South Western Area Gastroenterology Service), which includes combined teaching meetings on a monthly basis. Advanced trainees are attached to Bankstown and Liverpool Hospitals.

The Professor of Medicine, based at Bankstown Hospital, is involved in a Pancreatic Research Group, with the main areas of interest including alcohol-induced pancreatic disease, pancreatic fibrogenesis and pancreatic cancer. The Group has received continuous funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council/ Department of Veterans’ Affairs since 1987 and is internationally recognised as a world-leading Group at the cutting edge of current research into the mechanisms responsible for alcoholic pancreatitis and pancreatic fibrosis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- An Area-wide Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology be developed.
- Bankstown and Liverpool provide Level 6 gastroenterology services.
- Endoscopy units be stand alone services with dedicated staff.
- ERCP be performed in established, dedicated endoscopy units.
- All emergency Gastrointestinal endoscopy be performed at Bankstown and Liverpool Hospitals. Elective gastroscopy & colonoscopy continue to be performed at Fairfield, Campbelltown, Camden and Bowral Hospitals.
- Gastroenterologists and surgeons performing endoscopic procedures participate in regular clinical audits.