
Creating a Short Stay Unit (SSU) in Emergency Department

Initiative Type

Model of Care

Status

Deliver

Added

19 July 2017

Last updated

20 October 2024

URL

<https://cnxp3cuvtvrn68yjaibaht5ywrxspj7m.clinicalexcclence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/ssu>

Summary

An Emergency Department Short Stay Unit (SSU) is a unit managed by and attached to the Emergency Department (ED) and whose prime orientation is to manage acute problems for patients with an expected combined ED and ED SSU length of stay of greater than 4 hours, but less than 24 hours.

Key dates

Jul 2016

Implementation sites

Queensland Health Emergency Departments

Key Contacts

Laureen Hines

0007

paul.blee.hiu

Director Statewide Access

Healthcare Improvement Unit

(07) 3328 9937

Laureen.Hines@health.qld.gov.au

Aim

Emergency Department Short Stay Units are designated and designed for the short term treatment, observation, assessment and reassessment of patients initially triaged and assessed in the Emergency Department.

Benefits

- Reduce patient length of stay within the Emergency Department
- Reduce the number of patients who 'did not wait'
- Improve clinical outcomes
- Increase emergency department turnover

Background

SSUs are designated and designed for the short term treatment, observation, assessment and reassessment of patients initially triaged and assessed in the Emergency Department.

Solutions Implemented

The model requires the following elements:

- Are designated and designed for the short term treatment, observation, assessment and reassessment of patients initially triaged and assessed in the ED
- Have specific admission and discharge criteria and procedures
- Are designed for short term stays no longer than 24 hours
- Are physically separate from the ED acute assessment area
- Have a static number of available treatment spaces with oxygen, suction and patient ablution facilities; and
- Are not a temporary ED overflow area, nor used to keep patients solely awaiting an inpatient bed, nor awaiting medical imaging, nor awaiting treatment in the ED.

Evaluation and Results

- Improved Emergency Department patient journey
- Increase patient satisfaction
- Improved length of stay
- Improved efficiency of Emergency Departments

Further Reading

[Emergency Department Short Stay Unit Guidelines](#) [Emergency Medicine Journal: Effectiveness and safety of an emergency department short-stay unit as an alternative to standard inpatient hospitalisation](#) [Medical Journal of Australia Review: Short Stay Units](#)

PDF saved 19/05/2025