

Tuesday, 16 May 2017

After hours campaign provides emergency alternatives

Brisbane North PHN will this week re-launch the Emergency Alternatives emergency department (ED) avoidance advertising campaign, building on the success of the campaign during winter last year.

A survey of 300 people following the 2016 campaign showed that seven in ten (77 per cent) now understand there are a number of alternatives for medical help after hours.

Brisbane North PHN Chief Executive Abbe Anderson said the Emergency Alternatives campaign had resonated with people on a cognitive level, with many heeding the message that the emergency department was not always the best option.

"We are pleased to report that nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of those surveyed claimed to have used one of the other after hours services (the Health Direct symptom checker, 13 HEALTH or their after hours GP) as a result of seeing the campaign," Ms Anderson said.

"This has shown that the campaign is contributing to a dent in after hours emergency department presentations and is helping increase people's understanding of what services are available in the community," she said.

Research to inform the campaign showed that half of non-urgent patients (categories four and five) attending an ED after hours were under the age of 30, which includes babies and young children.

"That's why the 2017 campaign will again target parents with children and young adults aged 20-29 years," Ms Anderson said.

"Our material features scenarios that demonstrate ailments statistically most likely to impact these groups after hours and then presents alternatives to visiting the local emergency department," she said.

"Our research has now shown this educational approach is successful in increasing awareness about options for medical help and advice, as well as empowering people to make informed decisions about their healthcare after hours."

The campaign directs people to the Emergency Alternatives website where they can access the Health Direct online symptom-checker, phone 13 HEALTH, find a GP using the National Health Service Directory or make a plan for next time someone in their household needs medical help and advice after hours.

The website uses a colour-coded scale of emergency alternatives:

- **BLUE:** Getting worried? Get free customised medical information online using Health Direct symptom-checker.
- **GREY:** Need to talk now. Call 13 HEALTH to get health advice from a registered nurse 24/7.
- **AMBER:** Need to see a doctor. Call your GP or an afterhours GP service to see a doctor 24/7.
- **RED:** It's an emergency. Serious illness? Accident? Suspected heart attack or stroke? Go to a hospital ED or call 000 for an ambulance.

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To visit the campaign website, go to www.emergencyalternatives.org.au.

ENDS

Editor's note:

Print quality images of Abbe Anderson are available from Dropbox here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/oam50efcrp6h6ro/AADr8LzQXkdsJ567bWDHtq0da?dl=0>

About Brisbane North PHN

Brisbane North PHN is one of 31 Primary Health Networks nationwide and supports clinicians and communities within North Brisbane, Moreton Bay and parts of the Somerset region. It covers approximately 4,100 km² of urban, regional and rural areas, with a population of over 900,000.

The key objectives of the PHN are:

- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and
- improving coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

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