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## Save our Emergency Department for real emergencies

Every day the St George Hospital Emergency Department sees patients who could receive treatment more appropriately by accessing a different service.

Dr Peter Grant, senior staff specialist, Emergency Department, said this can put extra pressure on staff when they may be needed for a real emergency.

“It’s important that people get the right care, in the right place, at the right time,” Dr Grant said.

“There are many alternatives to seeking treatment in the Emergency Department and going directly to an appropriate practitioner can help you to a quicker recovery, improved follow up, and better continuity of care. This also helps free up St George Hospital services to run as efficiently as possible.

“It’s important to stress that people who are experiencing heart and breathing problems or who feel they need urgent medical attention should always attend their closest Emergency Department or call 000.”

St George Hospital is a major trauma centre and has one of the busiest Emergency Departments in New South Wales.

“At peak times, especially over holiday periods, the Emergency Department workload can be very high. We need to make sure that we are able to see people quickly if they need emergency care,” Dr Grant said.

“Members of the public have always recognised that the Emergency Department is for those with genuine emergencies, however, they are not always aware of what alternatives are available, especially when their own GP is closed.

“This sometimes leads to them attending the Emergency Department for non-urgent conditions, only for us to have to explain that there is limited scope for the Emergency Department to manage their condition. This is frustrating for them and diverts us from other patients.”

When the local GP is closed, people can seek treatment at an after-hours GP service. An increasing number of General Practices and Medical Centres are offering after-hours services, including after-hours GP clinics at St George Private Hospital and Kareena Private Hospital.

Health advice is also available at the 24-hour free hotline on 1800 022 222 (*Healthdirect* Australia), which is manned by a registered nurse.

Your local pharmacist can also provide a whole range of services including advice, support and guidance on your health problems, as well as help with your medicines.

For more information go to: <http://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/SGH/>

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