

National Elective Surgery Target Database 2013, 2014 (year to date) Data Quality Statement

Identifying and definitional attributes

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Data quality

Quality statement summary:

Summary of key data quality issues

- The National Elective Surgery Target Database (NESTD) is a compilation of episode-level data on patients added to or removed from, or still waiting on elective surgery waiting lists managed by public hospitals.
- States and territories provided data to the NESTD as agreed between the Commonwealth and states and territories for the purposes of the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospitals (NPA-IPHS). The NESTD covered most hospitals that undertook elective surgery. Hospitals that were not included may not undertake elective surgery, may not have had waiting lists, or may have had different waiting lists compared with other hospitals.
- While coverage of the NESTD was essentially complete for the purposes of reporting the NPA-IPHS, the NESTD did not include data from the Albury Base Hospital.
- Although there are national standards for data on elective surgery waiting times, methods to calculate waiting times have varied between states and territories and over time.
- There is an apparent lack of comparability of clinical urgency categories among jurisdictions that may result in statistics that are not meaningful or comparable between jurisdictions.

Description

The NESTD provides episode-level data on patients added to or removed from elective surgery waiting lists managed by public hospitals. This includes private patients treated in public hospitals, and may include public patients treated in private hospitals. 'Public hospitals' may include hospitals that are set up to provide services for public patients (as public hospitals do), but are managed privately.

States and territories provided data to the NESTD as agreed between the Commonwealth and states and territories for the purposes of the NPA-IPHS.

The data supplied for 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 are based on the National Minimum Data Set for Elective Surgery Waiting Times (Census and Removals) (ESWT NMDS) 2013—.

The NESTD includes data elements on waiting times for elective surgery, clinical urgency category, indicator procedure and reason for removal from the waiting list. The database also includes flags provided by states and territories to indicate where admissions from waiting lists had an adverse event or unplanned readmission reported.

Institutional environment: The AIHW is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987 (Cwth) to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent statutory authority established in 1987, governed by a management board, and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians through better health and welfare information and statistics. It collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, ranging from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The AIHW also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The Institute works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act, in conjunction with compliance to the Privacy Act 1988 (Cwth), ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au.

Data for the NESTD were supplied to the AIHW by state and territory health authorities under the terms of the NPA-IPHS. The NPA-IPHS requires states and territories to provide the data to the Department of Health (Health). AIHW collated the data on behalf of Health.

The state and territory health authorities received these data from public hospitals. States and territories use these data for service planning, monitoring and internal and public reporting. Hospitals may be required to provide data to states and territories through a variety of administrative arrangements, contractual requirements or legislation.

Timeliness: Data for the NESTD are reported quarterly. The NESTD includes episode-level data on patients added to, removed from, or still waiting on elective surgery waiting lists managed by public hospitals from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014.

Most states and territories provided a first version of the full 2013–14 data to the AIHW during July 2014. These data were reported in early October 2014. Data provision and publication were in accordance with agreed timetables.

Accessibility: The AIHW provides a variety of products that draw upon the NESTD. Published products available on the AIHW website are the Australian hospital statistics series of products, with associated Excel tables.

These products may be accessed on the AIHW website at www.aihw.gov.au/hospitals/.

Interpretability: Metadata information for the ESWT NMDS is published in the AIHW's Metadata Online Registry (METeOR) and the National health data dictionary.

METeOR and the National health data dictionary can be accessed on the AIHW websites, respectively:

</content/index.phtml/itemId/520154>

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737422826>.

Relevance: The NESTD is the source of information is to report performance indicator information for the NPA-IPHS.

Scope and coverage

The NESTD provides information on waiting times for elective surgery in public hospitals. The scope of the data collection is patients on waiting lists for elective surgery that are managed by public hospitals. This may include public patients treated in private hospitals and other patients treated in public hospitals.

States and territories provided data to the NESTD as agreed between the Commonwealth and states and territories for the purposes of the NPA-IPHS. The NESTD covered most hospitals that undertook elective surgery. Hospitals that were not included may not undertake elective surgery, may not have had waiting lists, or may have had different waiting lists compared with other hospitals. While coverage of the NESTD was essentially complete for the purposes of reporting the NPA-IPHS.

The NESTD did not include 2013–14 data for the Albury Base Hospital.

Reference period

The reference period for this data set is 2013–14. The data set includes records for patients added to, removed from, or still waiting on elective surgery waiting lists managed by public hospitals between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2014.

Accuracy:

Data validation

States and territories are primarily responsible for the quality of the data they provide. However, the AIHW undertakes extensive validations on receipt of data. Data are checked for valid values, logical consistency and historical consistency. Where possible, data in individual data sets are checked with data from other data sets. Potential errors are queried with jurisdictions, and corrections and resubmissions may be made in response to these edit queries.

Information on adverse events and unplanned readmissions was calculated and provided by the states and territories on a quarterly basis. The AIHW is therefore unable to assess the quality of the data.

Potential sources of variation

Although there are national standards for data on elective surgery waiting times, methods to calculate waiting times have varied between states and territories and over time. For example, in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, for patients who were transferred from a waiting list managed by one hospital to that managed by another, the time waited on the first list is not included in the waiting time reported to the NESTD from the second hospital. Therefore, the number of days waited in those jurisdictions reflected the waiting time on the list managed by the reporting hospital only.

The quality of the data reported for Indigenous status for the NESTD has not been formally assessed; therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting these data.

There is an apparent lack of comparability of clinical urgency categories among jurisdictions which may result in statistics that are not meaningful or comparable between jurisdictions.

Non-response adjustment

The AIHW does not adjust data to account for possible data errors or missing or incorrect values, except as stated.

Coherence:

Coherence

The data reported for the 2013–14 NESTD are consistent with data reported for previous years for individual hospitals.

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: AIHW