

# THREE DAYS OF DISCHARGE MEDICATION SUPPLY NOT GOOD ENOUGH

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## Background

Patients discharged from regional hospitals in NSW may be dispensed **as little as three days** of hospital-initiated medications or those that have been modified. The limited supply aims to provide patients with adequate time to visit their general practitioner (GP) for review. The **GP shortage in regional areas** brings to question whether three days supply is adequate to ensure **appropriate transition of care**.

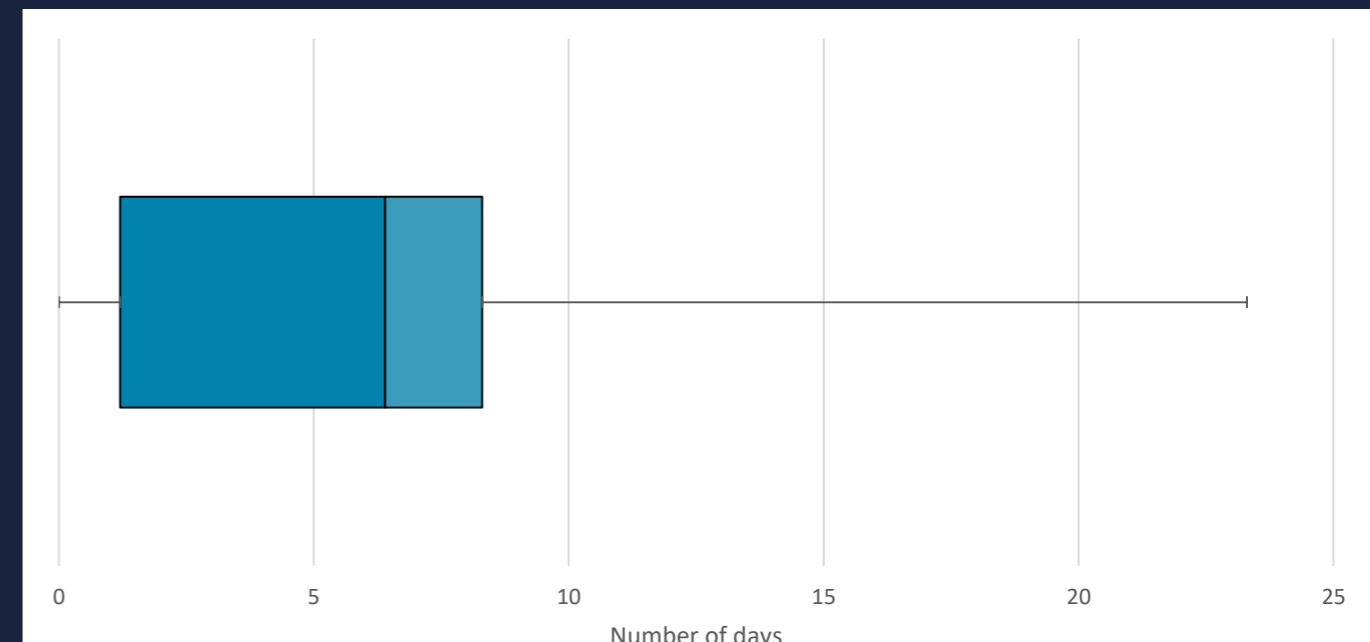


Figure 1. 5-number summary boxplot of next available GP appointment times (in days) in Shellharbour LGA.



## Aim

To assess the congruency of three days discharge medicines supply to booking availability of GPs within a regional hospital's local government area (LGA).



## Methods

This cross-sectional study identified medical centres providing GP services within the regional hospital's LGA using the Healthdirect search engine. A standardised telephone survey was used to question receptionists on next available appointments of all GPs. GPs on extended leave or locums were excluded. For GPs who were identified working at multiple centres, inclusion of only the earliest appointment was considered. A 5-number statistical summary of the average times was calculated.



## Results

16 medical centres comprising 73 GPs were surveyed. The average number of days to an appointment with a GP was 6.2 days [0.0, 1.2, 6.4, 8.3, 23.3]. An average incongruency of 3.2 days' supply deficit was observed.



## Discussion

Patients receiving the minimum three day supply of discharge medications have an average deficit of 3.2 days before being able to see a GP. This value is likely underestimated as it assumes GP appointments are arranged on the same day as discharge. This study highlights the risk of unintentional lack of medication adherence. Whilst the authors appreciate there were several same day appointments in the area it is gold standard care for patients to be reviewed by their own GP for continuity of care - not as a means to obtain prescriptions. A review to increase existing discharge supply quantities is warranted.



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