

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Venica Soo, Media and Communications Consultant, Mercy Health

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A new gold standard for obstetric care

In an Australian first, Werribee Mercy Hospital has introduced an obstetric triage tool to support the consistent, accurate and timely emergency care of pregnant and postpartum women.

Funded by Better Care Victoria, the *Obstetric Triage Decision Aid* developed by the Mercy Hospital for Women Emergency Department (ED), has been piloted at Werribee Mercy Hospital's ED and Maternity Assessment Unit (MAU). The aim is to make it available to emergency departments and maternity services across Victoria.

Midwife and Nurse Unit Manager of the Mercy Hospital for Women ED, Mary McCarthy, led the development of the aid to improve health outcomes for mothers and babies who require emergency care.

"Basically what we're doing is working out who is urgent and how quickly they need to be seen, to reduce the clinical risk to mothers and their babies," Ms McCarthy says.

Hospitals traditionally use the Australasian Triage Scale for everyone presenting to EDs. However, this scale may not reflect the urgency of an obstetric condition, and highlighted an area for improvement.

The *Obstetric Triage Decision Aid* was introduced to Werribee Mercy Hospital's ED in March 2017. It was also adopted by the hospital's MAU as a new process with impressive results.

The MAU monitors women who are more than 20 weeks pregnant and experiencing pregnancy related concerns. The MAU at Werribee Mercy Hospital sees about 8,500 presentations each year.

"In September, 73 per cent of women who presented to the MAU unit were triaged within 15 minutes, up from 43 per cent 12 months ago," Ms McCarthy says. "We are very pleased with these results."

Ms McCarthy says Mercy Health is committed to continually improving its services and patient care.

"By redesigning the obstetric triage system, we have changed the workflow process and the way we work. This has enabled us to further improve our clinical documentation and set higher benchmarks for a safe and quality approach to patient care.

"We consulted with an expert panel of midwives, triage nurses, obstetricians, anaesthetists and emergency department consultants across Victoria to help us fine tune the Obstetric Triage Decision Aid."

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