

Tuesday 21 November 2023

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**Week in review** Last weekend's annual 'switch-on' of Christmas lights in Aberdeen signalled the start of winter. No ice or snow yet, but plenty of wet and stormy weather, and even moderately cold temperatures (5-8°C) can mean increased illness and higher death rates. What has this meant for health and care services in Grampian in the past 7 days?

Primary care deals with most of the increase in winter related illness and with operational pressure equivalent to G-OPES level 3 (the highest is 4) over the past week, some practices are reporting high demand associated with coughs and colds. In the Emergency Department at ARI, there has been a small increase overall in the number attendances (an average of 7 patients more each day) however, in general, seasonal trends mean ED attendances tend to be lower in winter than in the spring/summer – perhaps a surprising fact to many.

The biggest cause of pressure on hospitals in winter is the increasing number of people who require to be admitted from an ED. An additional 5 patients each day (on average) were admitted to ARI last week compared to the previous week. This may not sound like much, but it is part of an increasing trend - we are now admitting an average of 9 more patients per day from ED than we were in 2018. Older people, those with chronic respiratory conditions, heart disease, and associated illness typically drive the increases needed in health care services during the winter months. And sure enough, this has played out in Grampian over the past week with increases in general medical specialties.

We have also seen an increase, from the previous week, in the number of beds closed for staffing or maintenance reasons. This has affected our acute hospitals particularly, although mental health and community beds are also affected. With more demand and less capacity, this has resulted in extremely high levels of bed occupancy. Every day last week, daytime bed occupancy was over 100% in our main hospitals, and this means high turnover for patients, and extreme pressure for staff. At the beginning of November, 150 (10%) of our available beds across the system were occupied by people who are medically fit for discharge but delayed in hospital whilst waiting for care home places or social care support. 99 (66%) of those individuals were in community hospitals and Royal Cornhill. This is part of a worsening trend since the summer months when 7% of all available beds were occupied by patient delays.

Ending on a hopeful note, hospital activity relating to COVID-19 has reduced compared to the previous week, although 23 beds were occupied at the start of this week and there were ward closures (one partial) due to outbreaks. 'Flu levels are markedly lower this year than last. Our respiratory position may seem like cold comfort amongst the other pressures, but we can be somewhat relieved we do not seem to be heading towards a triple peak of flu, covid and RSV as we were in December last year.

**Annual Review** The NHS Grampian Annual Review will take place tomorrow (22 November) between 3.30-4.30pm, on Teams. If you wish to attend, please contact us via [gram.communications@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.communications@nhs.scot). The event will be recorded and shared online for those unable to attend.

**RAAC update** Our thanks again to all teams involved for their patience and understanding during the programme of RAAC inspections in late August/early September. The complete list of buildings checked and the outcome of these is now available here: [NHS Scotland Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete \(RAAC\) Survey Programme \(nhsgrampian.org\)](https://www.nhs.uk/news/2023/08/23-raac-survey-programme-nhs-grampian-org). Teams from Estates and Planning are in contact with those services where further work may be required.

**World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week (WAAW)** This annual campaign kicked off on Saturday, running through until Friday. More information on the aims of the campaign is available here: [World AMR Awareness Week 2023 \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-antimicrobial-resistance-awareness-week-2023) Antimicrobial prescribing guidance for Adults in the Acute Sector can now be accessed directly by HEPMA users via the Antimicrobial Companion app icon on your NHSG desktop:



[Take the pledge to be an Antibiotic Guardian](#), follow local guidance, and help #KeepAntibioticsWorking.

**£1.85M invested in MRI upgrade** Patients and staff alike are feeling the benefit after investment of £1.85M into upgrading the Hutchison MRI Centre and the surrounding radiology department facilities at Woodend Hospital. The magnet within the MRI scanner has been upgraded, rather than replaced, as a more sustainable choice. This involved removing the scanner, stripping the magnet down to its core, and then upgrading. Making sustainable choices whenever possible is a key part of our Plan for the Future. You can read the full story here: [£1.85M invested in MRI upgrade \(nhsgrampian.org\)](https://www.nhs.uk/news/2023/08/23-1-85m-invested-in-mri-upgrade-nhs-grampian-org)

**Christmas decorations** 'Tis (almost) the season and the infection prevention & control team have updated their guidance on safely decorating your ward/clinic/area. It is available to view on the intranet here: [Risk Control Notice – Christmas decorations](#). It is also attached to the email used to send this brief, for convenience.

**Christmas service guide** While we're on the festive theme, this is your call to start sending in the details of any service changes over the Christmas & New Year period. We are once again putting together a guide, to ensure everyone is up to date on any adjustments to usual running. Please email [gram.communications@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.communications@nhs.scot) with the subject title 'Festive service changes'.

**New Director of Research & Development appointed** Professor Seshadri Vasana has joined us as the Director of Research and Development (R&D). He will lead the development and implementation of a new R&D Strategy, be a Deputy Caldicott Guardian, and champion the interests of the North as NHS Research Scotland Management Board Member, Opportunity North East Life Sciences Board Member, and Non-Executive Director of InnoScot Health.

To engage with life sciences, health and medical research and innovation, look out for future announcements about the IX Grampian Research Conference, scheduled to take place at Aberdeen in mid 2024.

**NoSCAR Seminar Series 2023 – tomorrow** The next seminar, on Research Ethics, will be held via MS Teams tomorrow (22 November) between 1.30 - 2.30pm. No need to register, [you can use this link](#) to join the meeting directly.

**Tune of the day** Rachel Medich makes today's request: uniform requirements prevent her from taking part in t-shirt day on Friday (see yesterday's brief for more), but if she had the chance, she'd be wearing Joy Division or The Killers. How do you get from one to the other? Joy Division, of course, became New Order after the death of Ian Curtis. [In 2001 New Order released Crystal](#), with the video featuring a fictitious band called The Killers. Brandon Flowers saw the video and the rest, as they say, is history... (EP)

If you want to request a tune, follow up on items included in this brief, or suggest an item for sharing, drop us an email via [gram.communications@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.communications@nhs.scot)