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Better management of medical equipment would result in efficiencies

The Auditor General tabled a report in Parliament today that found medical equipment failure rarely has a serious impact on patient care, but that efficiency gains are missed because asset management of the equipment is not effective.

The *Management of Medical Equipment* audit assessed whether the management of medical equipment in WA public hospitals is efficient and effective.

Auditor General Colin Murphy said failure or unavailability of equipment could present significant risks to patients, staff and service delivery – risks that the health system needs to manage.

‘Essential to delivering good quality healthcare is having appropriate equipment, fit for purpose and well maintained in the right place at the right time,’ Mr Murphy said.

We found scheduled maintenance was not done on 16% of the equipment in our sample, though the equipment remained available for use, thereby increasing the risk of incidents.

The audit also found 36% of equipment in the 8 hospitals exceeded its expected life. Although, old equipment can be fit for purpose, Health does not assess the cost of keeping it operational and as such is unable to determine if it represents value for money.

The report includes recommendations that the Department of Health develop an overarching policy for the management of medical equipment and take a proactive role in the development of asset management strategies and plans by health service providers.

‘Significant efficiencies are available in how medical equipment is managed, through better information, better planning and smarter procurement,’ Mr Murphy said.

The Department of Health and the health service providers accept the report recommendations, and the Department has identified the management of medical equipment as a priority area for reform.

Mr Murphy said the new area health boards have a clear opportunity to have an impact by taking responsibility and accountability for the management of medical equipment, which is a key part of patient care.

The Auditor General’s report, *Management of Medical Equipment* (Report 8 –2017), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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