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# Emergency care trends in the Western HSC Trust

This briefing paper provides information on attendance rates at the three emergency care sites in the Western Trust area between 2008 to the first half of 2011.

## 1 Introduction

The Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust has 3 emergency care sites.<sup>1</sup> These include:

- Two consultant-led Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments at Altnagelvin hospital, Londonderry and the Erne hospital, Enniskillen. Both are Type 1 emergency care providers that treat major illnesses and injuries.
- One nurse-led Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Tyrone County hospital, Omagh. This is classed a Type 3 emergency care provider.<sup>2</sup>

All three emergency care sites are operational 24 hours per day.

## 2 Statistics

A breakdown of the number of attendances over the last 3 years at the three hospital emergency care sites is shown in Figure 1 overleaf.

<sup>1</sup> Western Health and Social Care Trust Website: Available online at <http://www.westerstrust.hscni.net/1701.htm>. Website accessed 17.10.11

<sup>2</sup> In February/March 2009, Tyrone County hospital A&E was reconfigured from a Type 2 to a Type 3 emergency care provider, which meant that would treat less serious injuries.

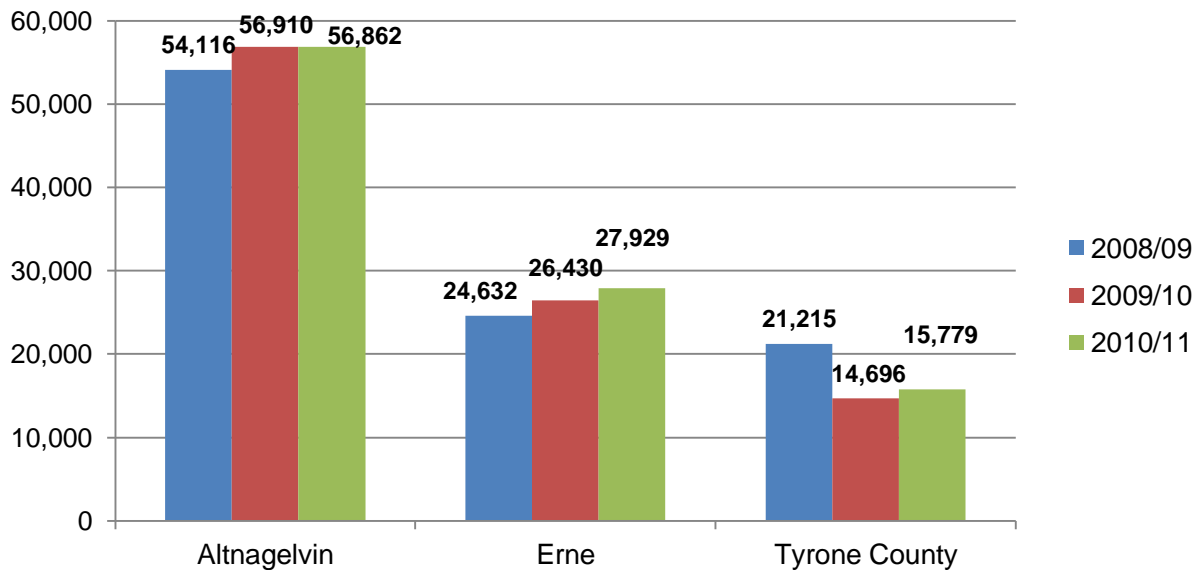


Figure 1 Total attendances at Emergency Care sites in the Western Trust (2008-11)<sup>3</sup>

Based on the figures above, it is evident that attendances at emergency care departments in the Western Trust have risen, with the exception of Tyrone County MIU which has actually declined since 2008/09. Tyrone County figures are lower because this unit was downsized to a minor injury unit and re-classified as a Type 3 Emergency Care department in March 2009.

In the Western Trust area, Altnagelvin hospital has the greatest number of attendances per year (over 50,000), followed by the Erne hospital (around 25,000) and then Tyrone County hospital (less than 16,000). The total number of attendances across the Western Trust's three Emergency Care departments was **100,570 in 2010/11**.

## 2.1 Trends by hospital

This section highlights the rate of A&E attendances on a month-by-month basis over the past 3 years. Figure 2 overleaf shows the number of attendances in all three emergency care Departments in the Western Trust since January 2008.

Due to the unplanned and unpredictable nature of emergency care, attendance rates fluctuate from month to month. Altnagelvin hospital appears to experience an increase in attendance rates in February/March each year, and the rates tend to gradually decrease by December. The overall trend in Altnagelvin is broadly similar to that witnessed for the Erne hospital, except that the Erne hospital attendance rates are on a smaller scale. Following the reconfiguration of Tyrone County hospital, the monthly attendance trends from March 2009 onwards in that hospital also appear to reflect the general trends set in both Altnagelvin and Erne hospitals, although again, this is on a smaller scale.

<sup>3</sup> DHSSPS Northern Ireland hospital statistics: Emergency care 2010/11 [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/a\\_e\\_annual\\_report\\_2010-11\\_final.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/a_e_annual_report_2010-11_final.pdf) page14

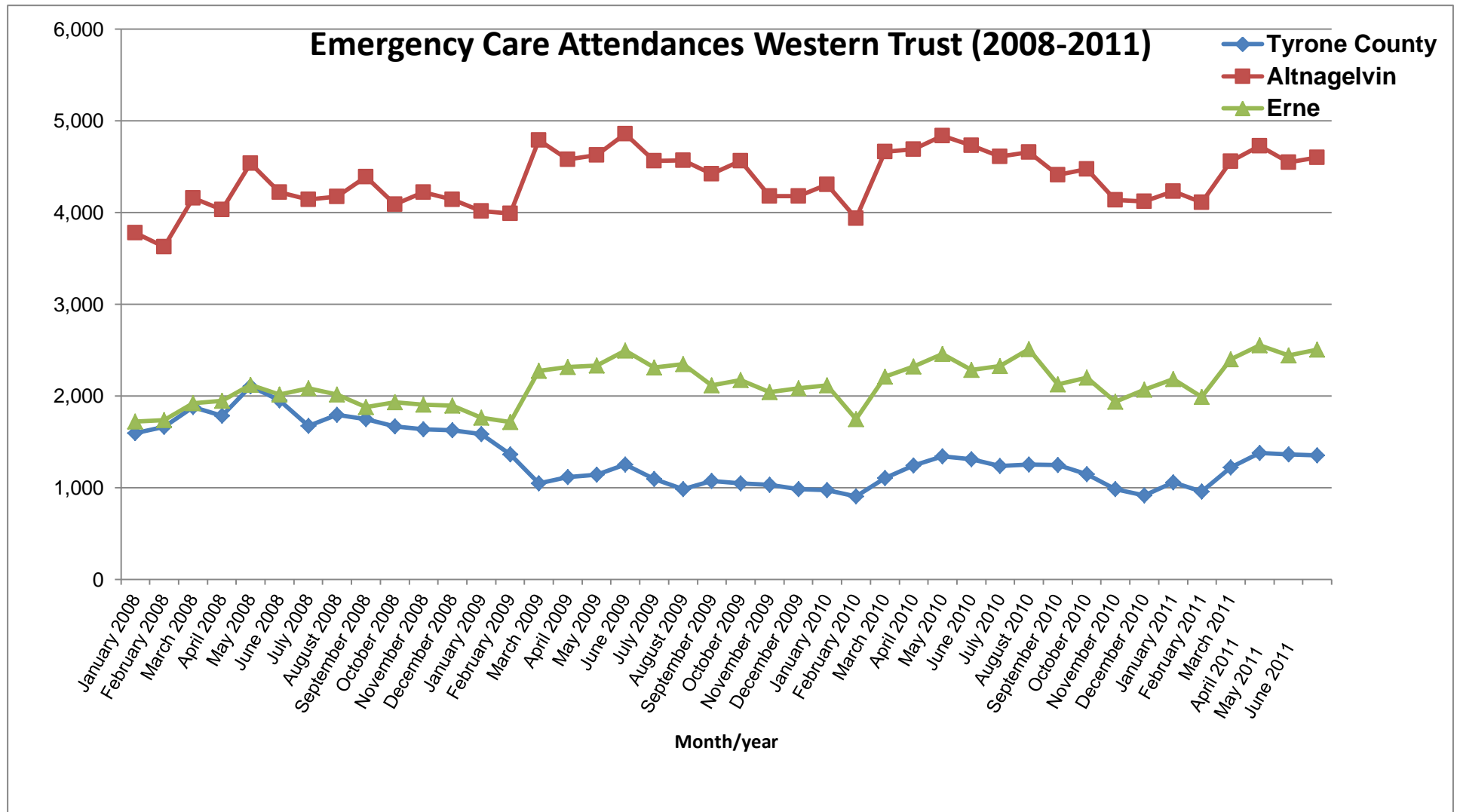


Figure 2 Trends in Emergency Care Departments in the Western Trust: New & unplanned attendances, 2008, 2009, 2010 and first half of 2011

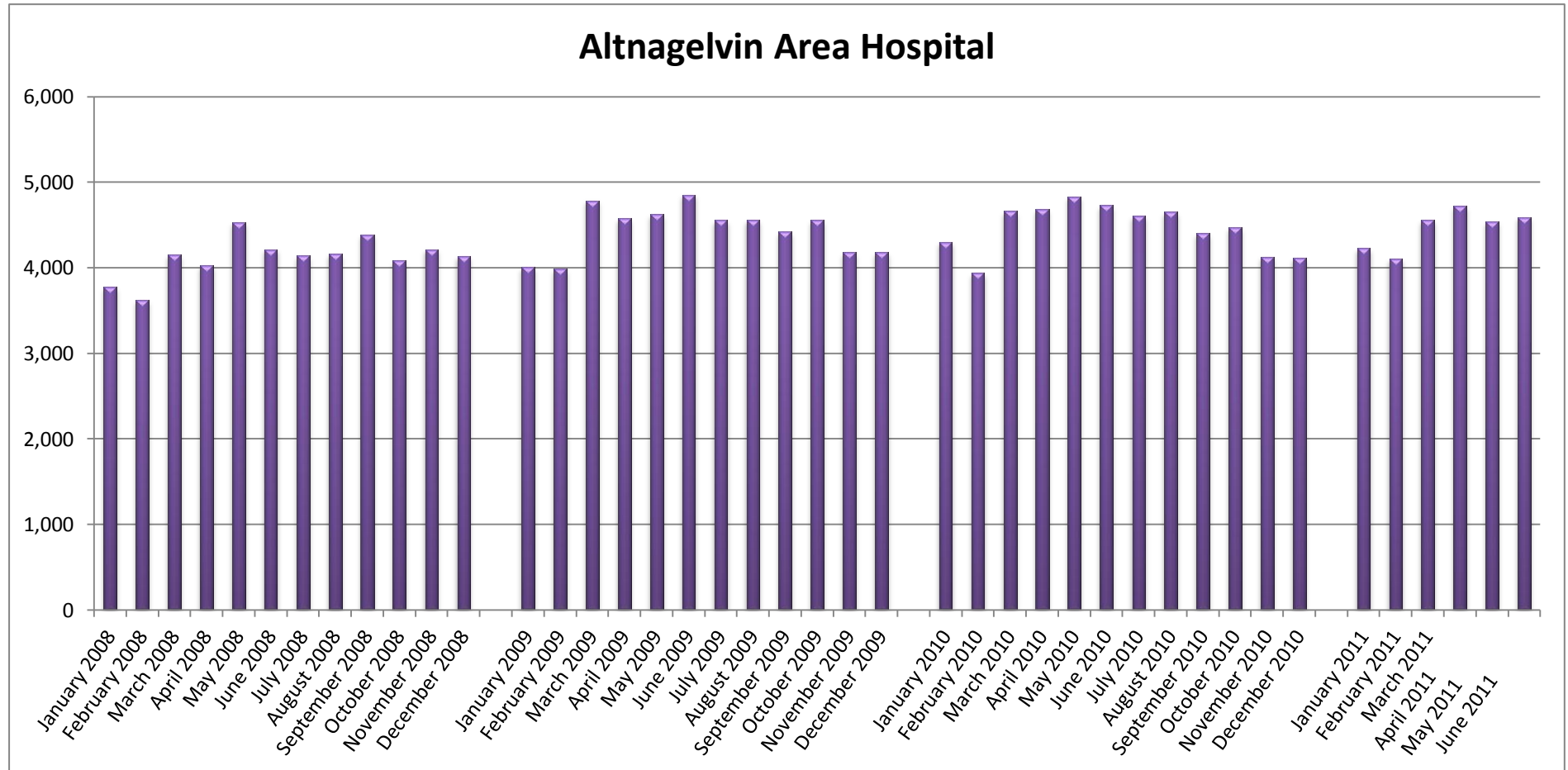


Figure 3 Altnagelvin Hospital Emergency Care Department: Number of new & unplanned attendances, 2008, 2009, 2010 and first half of 2011

As can be seen from the month-by-month breakdown of attendances between 2008 and the first half of 2011, the peak months in 2008 included May and September. Peak months in 2009 included March, June and October. In 2010, March through to August were the peak months. Although data for 2011 is not yet complete, both March and April have the highest attendance rates in 2011. On a yearly basis, the month of February tends to have the least number of attendances reported.

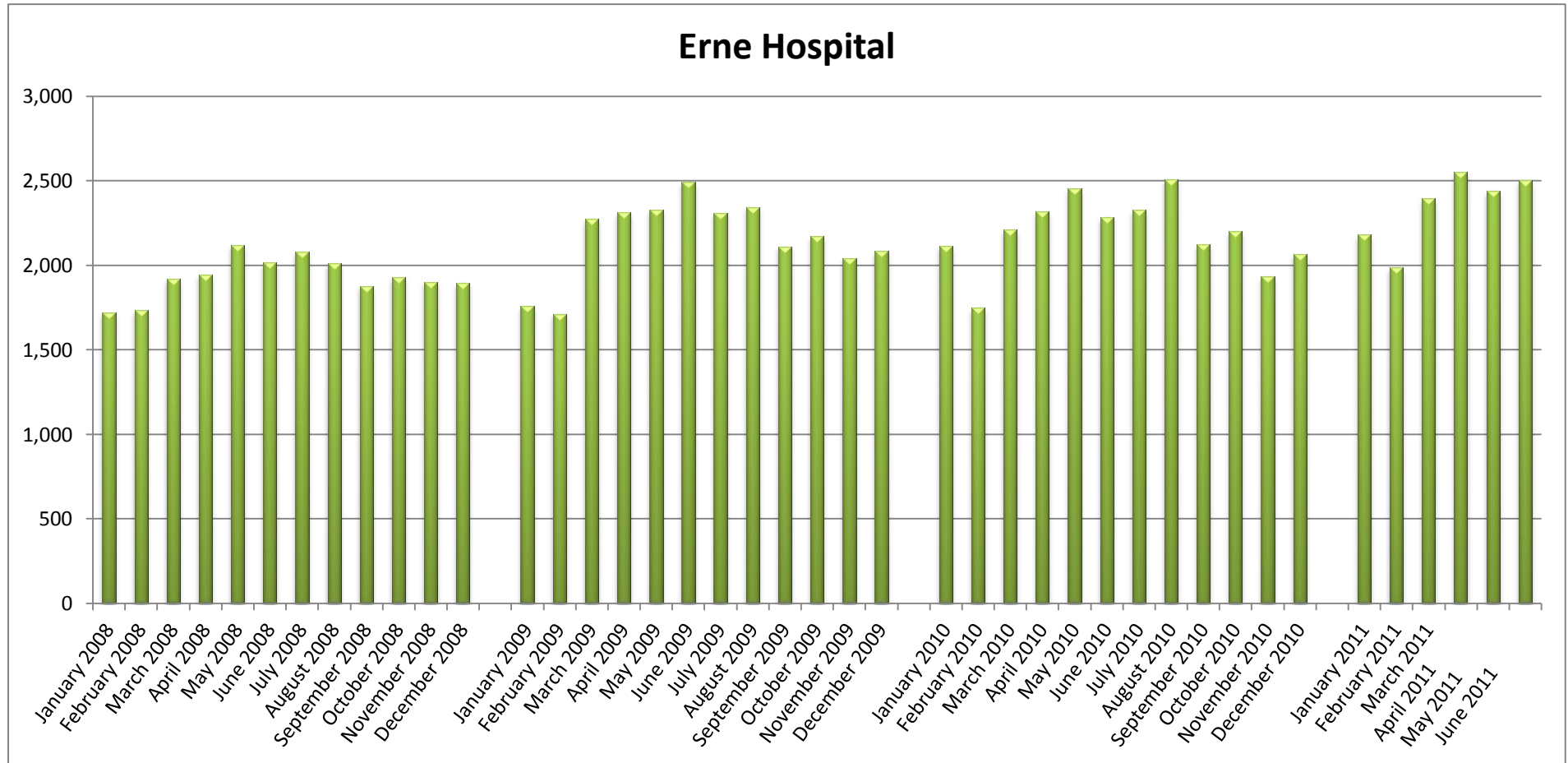


Figure 4 Erne Hospital Emergency Care Department: Number of new & unplanned attendances, 2008, 2009, 2010 and first half of 2011

Regarding Erne hospital, Figure 4 shows that May and July were the peak months in 2008. The number of attendances rose in 2009, with January and February reporting fewer attendances than the rest of the year. June was the peak attendance month in 2009, and rates generally decreased by the end of that year. In 2010, the month of February witnessed a lower number of attendances - a pattern which is reflected in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Peak months in 2010 included May and August. Data available for the first 6 months of 2011 shows that April has had the highest number of attendances (2,554) to date.

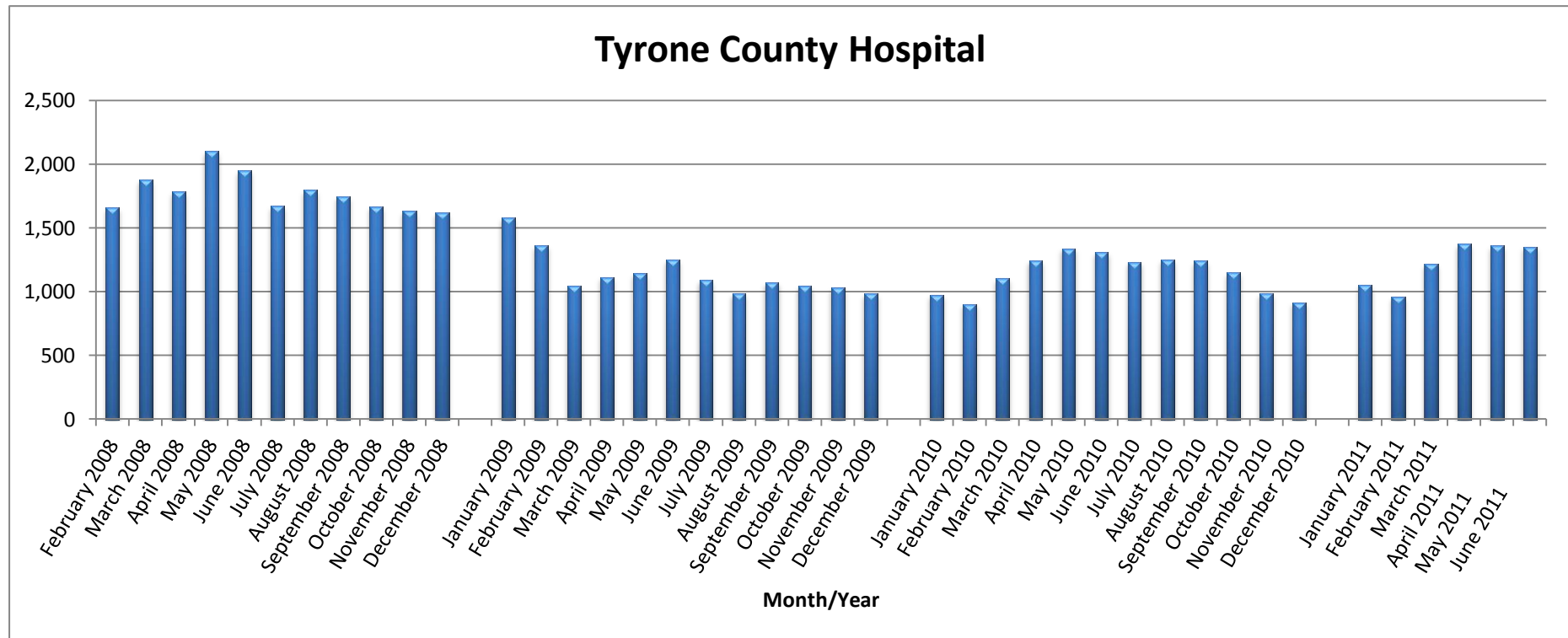


Figure 5 Tyrone County Emergency Care Department: Number of new & unplanned attendances, 2008, 2009, 2010 and part of 2011

For Tyrone County hospital, Figure 5 shows that May and June were the peak months for attendances in 2008. In 2009, high attendance rates were also reported in January and February, but following the reconfiguration of the service in March 2009, rates dropped in subsequent months. June also witnessed a higher number of attendances for 2009. In 2010, the month of February witnessed a lower number of attendances - a pattern which is evidence in most years (with the exception of 2009 as the service then changed). Peak months in 2010 included May and June, with the figures generally in decline by December 2010. Data available for the first 6 months of 2011 shows that April, May and June have all had the highest number of attendances reported to date.

According to the Western Trust, the MIU tends to have higher attendance in spring/summer due to injuries such as children falling off bicycles, trampoline injuries, adults sustaining injuries in the garden (foreign bodies, cutting tip of finger) and football injuries. Winter injuries vary widely and include ankle, leg injuries and dislocated fingers.