

28 June 2021

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Re: Official Information Act request – Referred by the GP to the DHB for a joint replacement

I refer to your Official Information Act request dated 31 May 2021 requesting the following information:

****Please apply these questions below to the calendar year of 2020 AND 2017:**

1. How many people were referred by the GP to the DHB for a joint replacement that year?

Auckland DHB can't identify the specific procedures from a referral. When new patients are referred for a consultation for pain or other orthopaedic ailments, the First Specialist Assessment (FSA) is followed by X Ray, other tests, a follow up appointment and the outcome of the follow-up generally determines if the patients require a joint replacement surgery. Even then the surgery is done only after the patient gets through the pre-admission requirements and is found to be fit to have a surgery.

We can submit the total number of referrals received in Orthopaedics but this data is not limited to Joint replacements.

The total number of Orthopaedic referrals that we received from GPs are:

2017	3909
2020	3480

2. Of those, how many did not receive a first specialist appointment with a specialist orthopaedic surgeon?

Total referrals cancelled/declined that were received from GPs during the year:

2017	1553
2020	1117

3. Of those who had their first appointment with the specialist orthopaedic surgeon, how many were then referred/sent back to their GP?

2017	627
2020	582

4. Of those patients that were referred by GP for joint replacement surgery, how many went ahead to have surgery by the DHB?

The data below includes only the referrals received in the respective year from GP and of these, the patients who received joint replacement surgery.

Note: We cannot identify the specific procedure from referrals but we can identify from the surgical waitlist.

2017	445
2020	245

5. Of those who were referred by GP and had a first specialist appointment with an orthopaedic surgeon, how many actually had their surgery with the DHB?

The data below includes only the referrals received in the respective year from a GP who had a FSA and of these, the patients who went to have joint replacement surgery.

Note: We cannot identify the specific procedure from referrals but we can identify from the surgical waitlist.

2017	438
2020	245

6. How many patients were deemed clinically necessary to go on a waiting list for joint replacement that year?

2017	861
2020	861

7. How many referrals from the GP and specialist for joint replacements were turned down that year?

As per Q1, these are not limited to Joint replacements but the total number of referrals declined:

2017	1134
2020	673

8. How many were turned down because of 'lack of capacity'?

Joint replacement patients are operated on through the elective surgery pathway in orthopaedics and after they have met the criteria to enter this pathway and go through the appropriate pre-admission assessment process. None are turned down because of lack of capacity, but occasionally patients have to be deferred or rebooked, usually due to an

overwhelming number of acute cases on a particular day. We are working hard to ensure there is sufficient capacity to ensure as many patients as possible receive their surgery in a timely fashion, once booked for elective joint replacement surgery.

9. Can you specify your DHBs criteria for joint surgery?

The criteria for joint surgery is based on their clinical and radiological assessment by vocationally registered consultant orthopaedic surgeons with a specific interest and expertise in joint replacement surgery. No patient can be placed on a joint replacement waiting list without a qualified specialist assessing and agreeing the patient meets clinical criteria that they feel justifies them having a joint replacement, based on their pain, restriction of mobility and functional activities and appropriate radiological changes. This is often balanced against the risks of surgery, delays in meeting anaesthetic clinical criteria and the likelihood of having to be cancelled or delayed for clinical reasons that have changed since their assessment and hospital admission. No patient who meets these clinical criteria is excluded from being placed on a surgeons elective waiting list.

10. How many points do patients need to get onto the waiting list for joint replacement in your DHB?

Patients need to have at least 60 points to be automatically eligible to be placed on the waiting list for a joint replacement. It is very uncommon for patients who meet the clinical criteria for having this procedure to score less than 70.

11. How many 'semi urgent' referrals from the GP to DHB for ENT (ears, nose throat) were actually seen by a specialist?

2017	2457
2020	2530

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Wilsher
Ailsa CE

Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive of Te Toka Tumai (Auckland District Health Board)