

10 June 2020

9(2)(a)

E-mail: 9(2)(a)

Dear 9(2)(a)

Official Information Act (1982) Request

I write in response to your Official Information Act request, initially submitted as a media query. On 27 February 2020, we notified you that the extent of data sought would require us to manage the request under OIA processes. On 28 February, you clarified your request to include the following information:

- **In the past 12 months, in terms of surgery that has been classified as "urgent" by the DHB, how many patients have been told they would need to wait 20 weeks, 30 weeks or 40 weeks or more for their procedure?**
 - a) *Please provide a breakdown to show the figures of the number of patients for each waiting time estimation.*
 - b) *When referring to "surgery", I'm seeking information on waiting times for general surgery, urology, gynaecology, ophthalmology or neurology.*
- **Please provide a breakdown to show the corresponding wait times for each of these surgical specialities.**

Thank you for your understanding of our need to defer further work on this OIA response in March 2020 due to COVID-19 response priorities.

For context, CM Health Services provide health and support services to more than 569,400 people residing in South Auckland, both in hospitals and community settings, along with some regional and supra-regional specialist services (Burns, Plastics and Orthopaedics). Some services, including neurology surgical services are provided to our community by other DHBs for the entire Auckland region.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient/ ambulatory and community-based models of care. We employ more than 7,500 staff, and see more than 118,000 presentations at the Middlemore Hospital Emergency Department each year. On average per month across all our services, we see more than 4,400 new outpatients for a First Specialist Appointment (FSA) and complete more than 1,500 Elective discharges.

Given the differences in DHB population sizes, health needs and the range of services and facilities/ capacity available in each DHB, comparisons between DHBs may also be misleading. In the time since your request, the impact of COVID-19 on health services has been acknowledged.

Responses to your request for CM Health surgical services are below, noting that any data on wait times and lists is constantly changing, and impacted by a number of clinical, capacity and system variables. All referrals are 'graded/ triaged' on receipt by a Senior Medical Specialist, for urgency, in some cases against nationally agreed CPAC scores. A decision-to-treat also includes a standard process to assign urgency and there are guide time frames for this in each service.

In addition, we note that the Ministry of Health does manage nationally consistent data on DHB elective services performance, known as ESPI performance. This sets a 120-day timeframe to complete a First Specialist Appointment, and a further 120 days from Decision-to-Treat to complete surgical procedure. These results are publicly available (most recent publicly available is for Oct 2018-Sept 2019, which is close to your specified timeframes)

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/september-2019-counties-manukau-espi-trend-and-services-summary.pdf>

These reports give DHB referral numbers per month, and percentage of total referrals that wait greater than 120 days for FSA, and longer than target times for a procedure. This information enables a consistent comparison of DHB performance over time and between DHBs.

1. In the past 12 months, in terms of surgery that has been classified as "urgent" by the DHB, how many patients have been told they would need to wait 20 weeks, 30 weeks or 40 weeks or more for their procedure?

- c) Please provide a breakdown to show the figures of the number of patients for each waiting time estimation.*
- d) When referring to "surgery", I'm seeking information on waiting times for general surgery, urology, gynaecology, ophthalmology or neurology.*

Following consultation with the services you noted, we do not believe that any patients assessed (via a range of processes, including national CPAC scores, referral triage and diagnostic triggers) as urgently needing any surgery was waiting over 20 weeks (140 days) for that surgery, once a decision to treat (operate) is taken.

As context, once a patient has attended an FSA, and a decision to treat is made, they are informed of the clinically determined priority for their case to be booked, and the anticipated wait times. As noted above, the ESPI performance reporting to the Ministry of Health guide maximum wait-times for elective First Specialist Appointments, and separately for wait-times to surgery, from the decision to treat.

2. Please provide a breakdown to show the corresponding wait times for each of these surgical specialities.

Wait-times for surgical specialties are managed/ informed and reported in a variety of way, including use of CPAC tools to allocate priority. Each service has provided available data on wait-times and performance in 2019, noting that the ESPI targets set a maximum timeframe and are consistently reported (including breaches), but that priority within this will be individually determined by clinical assessment.

Please refer to the notes in the table below regarding the specialties you specified.

Speciality	notes
General surgery	Surgical wait-times are allocated according to clinical priority. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Priority 1: 2 weeks• Priority 2: 6 weeks• Priority 3: 4 months
Gynaecology	Service uses the nationally agreed CPAC thresholds to prioritise cases. In 2019, for the 181 patients assessed as urgent (CPAC 100 score), the timeframes from decision-to-treat to an operation being completed were: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 52% complete within 30 days,• 38% complete between 30-70 days• 10% (18) waited over 70 days.
Urology	This is part of a regional service. Wait times in 2019 – all cases <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Median wait 22 days, average wait 38 days
Ophthalmology	Wait time in 2019 – all cases <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average 62 days for elective procedures.

Neurology surgical services are provided regionally at Auckland DHB, and medical neurology does not include surgical interventions.

I trust this information satisfactorily answers your query. If you are not satisfied with this response you are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

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

Yours sincerely,



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health