
01 October 2020

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Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request - Colonoscopy services

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 7 September 2020 seeking information about colonoscopy services from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB).

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā DHB serves a population of more than 630,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas, the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,500 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing services to our own population, we are also the metropolitan Auckland provider of forensic psychiatry, child disability services, child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we can provide the following information:

1. How many patients were on the waiting list for colonoscopies at the end of each month from August 2018 to August 2020

We advise caution in comparing information provided by the various DHBs as differences in population size and demographics have a direct impact on the results reported. As mentioned earlier, Waitematā DHB is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in New Zealand.

In addition, the National Bowel Screening Program (NBSP) was piloted at Waitematā DHB. This involves screening people without symptoms who would otherwise not have timely access to a colonoscopy and following them up at appropriate intervals with a surveillance colonoscopy. This has resulted in significant growth to our patient numbers and waiting list – see further details in our response to questions 2, 3 and 4.

The figures provided below demonstrate the significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bowel screening colonoscopy procedures were postponed during the lockdown period from 24 March, through until the end of April.

We are working hard to reduce the number of patients waiting for a colonoscopy in a variety of ways, such as running additional endoscopy theatre sessions and increasing our administration team resource to help with the increased amount of rescheduling and bookings during COVID-19 uncertainty. In addition, we are also planning to add Saturday theatre lists starting mid-October to ensure additional capacity, as well as continue working with contracted private providers to further increase timeliness of care.

Patients on the waiting list at the end of each month					
August 2018 to August 2020					
Aug-18	2,111	Aug-19	2,310	Aug-20	2,801
Sep-18	2,082	Sep-19	2,261		
Oct-18	2,054	Oct-19	2,184		
Nov-18	2,016	Nov-19	2,156		
Dec-18	2,148	Dec-19	2,307		
Jan-19	2,070	Jan-20	2,308		
Feb-19	1,995	Feb-20	2,185		
Mar-19	1,963	Mar-20	2,403		
Apr-19	2,076	Apr-20	2,676		
May-19	2,086	May-20	2,703		
Jun-19	2,231	Jun-20	2,632		
Jul-19	2,254	Jul-20	2,664		

2. What was the average wait time for urgent or category A colonoscopies at the end of each month from August 2018 to August 2020?
3. What was the average wait time for non-urgent or category B colonoscopies at the end of each month from August 2018 to August 2020?
4. What was the average wait time for surveillance or routine colonoscopies at the end of each month from August 2018 to August 2020?

See table below for urgent diagnostic colonoscopies, normal diagnostic colonoscopies and surveillance colonoscopies from August 2018 to August 2020:

Avg Wait time	Urgent Diagnostic (A) (Days)	Non-urgent Diagnostic (B) (Days)	Surveillance (Days)
Aug-18	4	37	82
Sep-18	5	39	92
Oct-18	3	44	103
Nov-18	5	46	111
Dec-18	5	49	116
Jan-19	3	64	127
Feb-19	3	65	123
Mar-19	6	63	120
Apr-19	5	60	103
May-19	3	56	97
Jun-19	6	57	94
Jul-19	3	55	87
Aug-19	5	53	92
Sep-19	3	52	92

Avg Wait time	Urgent Diagnostic (A) (Days)	Non-urgent Diagnostic (B) (Days)	Surveillance (Days)
Oct-19	5	53	77
Nov-19	4	57	77
Dec-19	0	59	88
Jan-20	4	65	101
Feb-20	2	67	107
Mar-20	2	69	112
Apr-20	3	89	117
May-20	5	104	124
Jun-20	3	106	133
Jul-20	2	110	132
Aug-20	5	112	144
Sep-20	6	108	148

With such a large population and the impact of a well-established bowel screening programme, the numbers provided reflect the need to balance both symptomatic and surveillance procedures.

Patients are advised to see their GP if their condition or symptoms changes. Their GP is then able to escalate the referral as appropriate.

Also of importance to note, Waitematā DHB patients are kept on our surveillance waiting lists for up to 10 years. This is because we were the first DHB to successfully implement a comprehensive electronic waiting list which enables us to follow-up a greater volume of patients for ongoing surveillance, if this is required.

5. What was the ratio between colonoscopies performed for non-urgent patients, versus patients referred through the National Bowel Screening Programme at the end of each month from August 2018 to August 2020? (If the screening programme has been rolled out in your DHB area).

Date	Non-Urgent Done	Bowel Screening Referral	Ratio
Aug-18	381	85	4 : 1
Sep-18	330	65	5 : 1
Oct-18	295	72	4 : 1
Nov-18	290	89	3 : 1
Dec-18	202	57	4 : 1
Jan-19	205	38	5 : 1
Feb-19	288	75	4 : 1
Mar-19	267	75	4 : 1
Apr-19	298	79	4 : 1
May-19	386	69	6 : 1
Jun-19	270	83	3 : 1
Jul-19	360	86	4 : 1
Aug-19	463	94	5 : 1
Sep-19	363	66	6 : 1
Oct-19	408	67	6 : 1
Nov-19	336	82	4 : 1
Dec-19	272	48	6 : 1

Date	Non-Urgent Done	Bowel Screening Referral	Ratio
Jan-20	252	43	6 : 1
Feb-20	301	54	6 : 1
Mar-20	240	63	4 : 1
Apr-20	70	0*	0
May-20	339	88	4 : 1
Jun-20	429	70	6 : 1
Jul-20	446	64	7 : 1
Aug-20	325	43	8 : 1

*There were no bowel screening colonoscopies performed during lockdown. When lockdown began on the 24 March, all procedures booked through until the end of April were postponed.

6. How many of your patients have recovered from colorectal cancer, versus those that died from the disease between August 2019 and August 2020?

We follow the care of individual patients on their recovery from colorectal cancer. We do not have a database where we can readily extract the number of “recovered” patients. It would also be difficult to provide an answer without further context in terms of the definition of the term “recovery”.

For the period from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020, there were 277 patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Of these, there were 27 deaths. Note we have not checked the individual clinical records of these patients and cannot comment on specific aspects of their care nor can we attribute cause of death.

The diagnoses of colorectal cancer used were to obtain these figures include:

- 'C18 Malignant neoplasm of colon'
- 'C19 Malignant neoplasm of rectosigmoid junction'
- 'C20 Malignant neoplasm of rectum'
- 'C21 Malignant neoplasm of anus and anal canal'
- 'UG Malignant neoplasm of rectum'
- 'UG Malignant neoplasm of anus and anal canal'
- 'UG Malignant neoplasm of colon'
- 'UG Malignant neoplasm of rectosigmoid junction'

7. How many colonoscopies led to a confirmed diagnosis of colorectal cancer each month from August 2018 to August 2020?

The figures provided below show the number of patients who have been diagnosed with colorectal cancer and have had a colonoscopy procedure:

Aug-18	14	Aug-19	16	Aug-20	10
Sep-18	21	Sep-19	16		
Oct-18	22	Oct-19	17		
Nov-18	20	Nov-19	18		
Dec-18	13	Dec-19	18		
Jan-19	14	Jan-20	11		
Feb-19	21	Feb-20	16		
Mar-19	18	Mar-20	18		
Apr-19	19	Apr-20	6		
May-19	19	May-20	10		

Jun-19	20	Jun-20	11
Jul-19	17	Jul-20	19

8. How many categories does your DHB divide your waiting list into? What are the criteria for each category?

Table 1: Colonoscopy wait-time indicator targets

Category	Recommended wait time targets	Maximum wait times
Urgent	90% of people accepted for an urgent diagnostic colonoscopy receive (or are waiting for*) their procedure in 14 calendar days or less	100% ⁴ within 30 days or less
Non-urgent	70% of people accepted for non-urgent diagnostic colonoscopy receive (or are waiting for*) their procedure in 42 calendar days or less	100% within 90 days or less
Surveillance	70% of people accepted for surveillance colonoscopy receive (or are waiting for*) their procedure in 84 calendar days or less	100% within 120 days or less

Reference: Ministry of Health. 2019. *Guide to managing colonoscopy wait time indicator performance*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

9. How many people are presently on the colonoscopy waiting list for each of these categories?

Month	Urgent Diagnostic	Normal Diagnostic	Surveillance	Grand Total
Sep-20	23	1,305	1,539	2,867

10. How long is the average waiting time for each category?

Month	Urgent Diagnostic (Days)	Normal Diagnostic (Days)	Surveillance (Days)
Sep-20	6	108	148

I trust that this information is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



Mark Shepherd
Director Provider Healthcare Services
Waitematā District Health Board