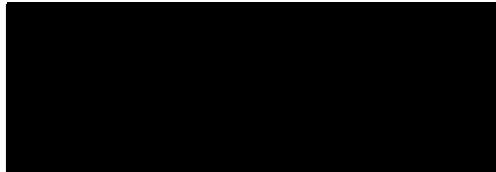




Hospital Services

North Shore Hospital Campus
Shakespeare Road, Takapuna
Private Bag 93-503, Takapuna
Auckland 0740
Telephone: 09 489 0527
Facsimile: 09 486 8339

29 October 2019



Dear 

Re: Official Information Act request – lymphoedema services available at Waitematā DHB

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 03 October 2019 seeking the following of Waitematā District Health Board (DHB):

1. *Does your DHB currently have a specified lymphoedema service?*
2. *What services are provided for patients with lymphoedema in your DHB?*
3. *How much funding is allocated for lymphoedema services within your DHB annually? Also, please include % of total budget. Please provide information for the last 3-5 years.*
4. *How many FTEs are allocated in your DHB for lymphoedema therapists?*
5. *How many lymphoedema therapist position vacancies have you had over the past year?*
6. *Does this service provide publicly funded lymphoedema services for cancer patients/survivors?*
7. *What is the eligibility criteria to access lymphoedema services for cancer patients/survivors in your DHB?*
8. *Please list lymphoedema services / procedures available/ offered for cancer patients/survivors in your DHB (including education and early signs detection).*
9. *Is there a funded provision for compression garments in your DHB? If so, please specify what provision is funded (how many sets of compression garments per year).*
10. *How can cancer patients/survivors access lymphoedema services in your DHB? Do they need a referral and who can provide the referral?*
11. *What is the average waiting time for cancer patients/survivors to access lymphoedema services within your DHB?*
12. *If you currently provide a lymphoedema service, what is the current waiting list status in your DHB? How many people are currently awaiting appointments? How many days is the waiting list currently at?*
13. *Is there a protocol on pre and post-surgery lymphoedema surveillance in your DHB and if so could you please provide it?*

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information.

1. Does your DHB currently have a specified lymphoedema service?

Waitematā DHB provides a lymphoedema service as part of its Outpatient Physiotherapy service.

2. What services are provided for patients with lymphoedema in your DHB?

Patients are assessed by a physiotherapist and provided with advice and education about skin care. They learn about the importance of exercise/movement, optimising body weight, and are provided with instruction on self-manual lymphatic drainage and compression bandaging, if

appropriate. In addition, they are provided with one set of compression garments that can be replaced every six months if worn daily.

3. How much funding is allocated for lymphoedema services within your DHB annually? Also, please include % of total budget. Please provide information for the last 3-5 years.

Approximately 1.0 physiotherapy FTE (currently costed at \$79,565 per annum) is allocated to provide services to lymphoedema patients. The service does not set a specific budget for compression garments as these are provided on an 'as required' basis. For this reason, it is difficult to give an accurate answer on percentage of Waitematā DHB's total budget.

4. How many FTEs are allocated in your DHB for lymphoedema therapists?

No FTE is specifically allocated to lymphoedema. However, as above, approximately 1.0 physiotherapy FTE is used for lymphoedema management across North Shore and Waitakere hospitals.

5. How many lymphoedema therapist position vacancies have you had over the past year?

As there is no specific lymphoedema therapist role, it is not possible to answer this question accurately. The current physiotherapists who help manage lymphoedema have been in those positions for more than five years. However, vacancies in Outpatient Physiotherapy sometimes lead to a reduction in lymphoedema service provision to cover other aspects of the outpatient service.

6. Does this service provide publicly funded lymphoedema services for cancer patients/survivors?

Yes.

7. What is the eligibility criteria to access lymphoedema service for cancer patients/survivors in your DHB?

Patients must live in our catchment area and be able to attend outpatient appointments.

8. Please list lymphoedema services / procedures available / offered for cancer patients / survivors in your DHB (including education and early signs detection).

Please refer to our response to question 2. Also, patients with planned axillary lymph node surgery are currently invited to attend a pre-operative education session regarding post-op exercises and activity limitations. Signs and symptoms of lymphoedema are included in this, as well as risk-reduction strategies.

9. Is there a funded provision for compression garments in your DHB? If so, please specify what provision is funded (how many sets of compression garments per year).

One set of compression garments is funded for each patient approximately every six months (a set is defined as the garments a patient requires in a 24-hour period) if the patient requires a compression garment for daily symptom management (rather than only occasional use) this may be reviewed every nine to 12 months, determined by a clinician-led decision.

10. How can cancer patients / survivors access lymphoedema services in your DHB? Do they need a referral and who can provide the referral?

While patients can self-refer, our preference is that referrals come from a member of their healthcare team to ensure a multidisciplinary approach to management.

11. What is the average waiting time for cancer patients / survivors to access lymphoedema services within your DHB?

Patients with a new diagnosis or a recent exacerbation of symptoms are currently seen within four to six weeks. Those with more stable symptoms, already in compression garments, are seen every four to six months. These patients are typically referred to us from a private lymphoedema therapist/physiotherapist, with a good understanding of self-care and management strategies, have stable symptoms and are in possession a self-funded compression garment.

12. If you currently provide a lymphoedema service, what is the current waiting list status in your DHB? How many people are currently awaiting appointments? How many days is the waiting list currently at?

There are currently 60 patients on our waiting list across the two hospital sites. Newly diagnosed cancer-related lymphoedema patients are currently being seen within six weeks. No one is currently waiting longer than six months.

13. Is there a protocol on pre and post-surgery lymphoedema surveillance in your DHB and if so could you please provide it?

We do not currently have a prospective surveillance model in place but are aware this would be best practice. We have an L-Dex machine (for bioimpedence spectroscopy readings) but as pre-op readings are not currently taken, this limits the usefulness of this tool. This is because patients are often only referred to us when they are symptomatic post-operatively which negates the benefit of an L-dex reading as part of a prospective surveillance approach.

I trust that this information meets your requirements. Waitematā DHB, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's 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 feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jonathan Christiansen
Acting Director Hospital Services
Waitematā District Health Board