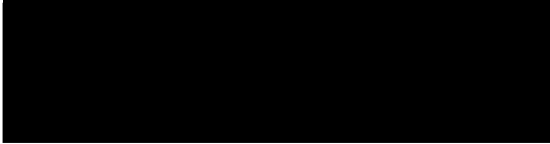




Hospital Services

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03 December 2019



Dear 

RE: OIA request – surgical resignation

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received on 13 November 2019, seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB).

Your original request, below, related to the Health Advisory Committee minutes of 23 October 2019:

My query relates to recent Hospital Advisory Committee (HAC) minutes.

<http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/assets/Documents/board/2019/Open-HAC-Oct-2019.pdf>

On Page 12 they state, "That the reference to surgeon resignations related to the Elective WIES volumes was noted and that this pertains to specific surgical specialities in the surgical division."

Can I please ask for more information:

- How many resignations have occurred and when?*
- What surgical specialties were these in?*
- Can you expand on how these were related to the elective WIES volumes? My reading of this is that these resignations may have occurred because of concerns the way funding or patient volumes are worked out is inaccurate or unfair, or creates too much pressure on staff?*
- Have these resignations been replaced? Are vacancies impacting on rosters or patient care?*
- What is happening going forward over this issue? Does the DHB share the surgeons concerns over elective WIES volumes?*

On the same day, you contacted us again with the following additional questions:

In addition to the questions lodged, can I ask that the OIA include:

- Copies of all correspondence, documents, memos, and reports relating to these resignations.*

Following these requests, we contacted you on the same day to advise there had been an error in the minuting of this item within the HAC minutes.

The issue related to the resignation of one individual clinician in a highly specialised area of Otorhinolaryngology (ORL).

We further advised that we would not be able to respond to your second request due to privacy concerns related to this specialist clinician. You advised you no longer wished to proceed with the second question but you did wish to proceed with the first question.

We have endeavoured to respond to your request as quickly as possible and can provide the following information:

How many resignations have occurred and when?

One highly specialised (ORL) surgeon resigned in December, 2018. The number of patients waiting for this specialist ORL surgery has subsequently increased. As this is a highly specialised field of practice, with relatively few people doing this work in New Zealand, one resignation can have a significant impact. The resignation was not due to an increase in patient demand as the minutes appeared to suggest. Rather, the increased patient demand (patients waiting for surgery) is a result of the resignation.

What surgical specialties were these in?

This relates to a vacant position in the ORL service.

Can you expand on how these were related to the elective WIES volumes? My reading of this is that these resignations may have occurred because of concerns the way funding or patient volumes are worked out is inaccurate or unfair, or creates too much pressure on staff?

This departure was not related to the elective WIES volumes or funding concerns.

Have these resignations been replaced? Are vacancies impacting on rosters or patient care?

This ORL vacancy has been advertised both nationally and internationally since December, 2018 without an appointment being made. There is a national shortage of expert clinicians in this specialty, as highlighted in recent publicity about ORL waiting times in Wellington.

While intermittent locum cover has ensured that no urgent clinic and surgery appointments have been delayed, patients with less-urgent needs have waited longer than the typical period of four months.

To manage this, locum cover is being increased over November and December to ensure patients continue to be seen by a specialist within a reasonable period of time. We expect locum cover to be ongoing into the New Year.

What is happening going forward over this issue? Does the DHB share the surgeons' concerns over elective WIES volumes?

We apologise for any confusion caused by the wording of the HAC minutes. At the full Board meeting on 13 November, an amendment to the HAC minutes was agreed in order to more precisely capture the issue. The wording of the amended minutes, which will be published online in full in due course, will reflect that the reference to surgeon resignations and Elective WIES volumes relates to the resignation of one ORL surgeon only, which subsequently led to longer wait time for some patients with non-urgent needs, and not the other way around.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Debbie Holdsworth', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Debbie Holdsworth
Acting Director Hospital Services
Waitematā District Health Board