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28 June 2021

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Dear ██████████

**Re: OIA request – Joint replacements in the calendar years 2020 and 2017**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 31 May 2021 seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about joint replacement surgery.

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

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,600 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we are able to provide 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?**
- 2. Of those, how many did not receive a first specialist appointment with a specialist orthopaedic surgeon?**
- 3. Of those who had their first appointment with the specialist orthopaedic surgeon, how many were then referred/sent back to their GP?**
- 4. Of those patients that were referred by GP for joint replacement surgery, how many went ahead to have surgery by the DHB?**
- 5. Of those who were referred by a GP and had a first specialist appointment with an orthopaedic surgeon, how many actually had their surgery with the DHB?**
- 7. How many referrals from the GP and specialist for joint replacements were turned down that year?**

We are not able to provide the information requested in questions 1 to 5 or question 7 as patients are not directly referred by a GP for a “joint replacement”.

GPs refer patients due to hip/knee/ankle pain or other associated symptoms and a cohort of these patients will be assessed as requiring joint replacement surgery.

In addition, all referrals are received into a central booking system which does not code referrals separately as being from either a GP or an external specialist surgeon.

To provide the specific data related to questions 1 to 5 and question 7, frontline clinical staff would need to review individual patient files for the hundreds of patients referred for hip/knee/ankle pain or associated symptoms in 2017 and 2020 to identify those who went on to be assessed as requiring joint replacement surgery. It would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records as they contain sensitive patient information. This would take frontline staff away from clinical work and prejudice our ability to provide core clinical services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the time frame for responding to your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. Therefore, we have determined to refuse these aspects of your request under section 18(f) of the official Information Act 1982 due to substantial collation or research.

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

Waitematā DHB uses the Ministry of Health (MoH) national prioritisation tool to establish which patients meet the criteria for joint replacements and clinical necessity. Only patients who meet the national criteria are added to the waitlist.

The numbers below show how many people were deemed clinically necessary to be added to the waiting lists in 2017 and 2020:

- **2017** – 2,063 patients were added to the surgical wait list for a hip or knee replacement after the First Specialist Appointment (FSA).
- **2020** – 1,760 were added to the surgical wait list for a hip or knee replacement after FSA.

The difference in volumes is due to the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic and subsequent Alert Level lockdowns in Auckland during 2020.

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

None of the patients referred to Waitematā DHB in 2017 and 2020 were turned down due to 'lack of capacity'.

**9. Can you specify your DHB's criteria for joint surgery?**

The DHB uses the Electives Resource Pack, Module 5 - Clinical Prioritisation from the Ministry of Health dated May 2014:

"The Clinical Priority Assessment Criteria (CPAC) tools provide a framework to assess the patient's relative priority based on a range of medical, social and complicating factors and are a documented assessment tool used to prioritise patients. These factors generate a total score, scoring patients from 0 to 100 (least to most-urgent)."

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

Based on the MoH guidelines for CPAC scores (above), Waitematā DHB has set a score of between 68 and 70 for knee replacement and hip replacement surgeries.

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

GPs do not allocate referrals by urgency except for an indication of potentially urgent symptoms. Urgency of referrals is established when referrals are graded by a Waitematā DHB otorhinolaryngology (ORL) specialist.

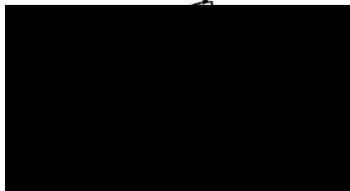
You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of the decisions made in providing this response. Information about how to seek a review is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Freephone 0800 802 602.

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



**Executive Director Hospital Services  
Waitematā District Health Board**