

1st October 2021

s9(2)(a)

Dear s9(2)(a)

Official Information Act Request for – Breast Reduction Surgeries

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 18th August 2021, you requested the following information:

1. The number of applications made to the Counties Manukau DHB for breast reduction surgery each year for the period 2016-2020, as well as the number of applications so far this year.
2. For each of those years, how many applications were accepted for first-round referrals & how many were denied?
3. What is the most common reason breast reduction applications have been denied?
4. How many breast reduction surgeries have been performed in each of those years, 2016-2020, as well as so far this year?
5. What is the average wait time for each patient between first application and the completion of surgery, again broken down by year?
6. How many patients are currently waitlisted for breast reduction surgery?

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 8,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 601,490 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

1. The number of applications made to the Counties Manukau DHB for breast reduction surgery each year for the period 2016-2020, as well as the number of applications so far this year
The below table reflects the number of applications made for breast reduction surgery from 2016 to mid-2020. CM Health moved from paper referrals to electronic referrals. As the referral criteria for routine surgery is not broken down into breast reduction specifically, this information is not available from mid-2020 onwards.

2016	2017	2018	2019	Until Mid-2020	2021
134	128	94	97	45	N/A

2. For each of those years, how many applications were accepted for first-round referrals & how many were denied?

As noted above, in 2020 CM Health changed from a manual to electronic system. Therefore, for 2020 we do not have the data for 1st decline which is the point that we decline as it does not fit the referral criteria (i.e. need clinical photos, BMI over 30 and smoking status), 2nd Decline is mostly based on our ability to provide routine plastic surgery.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021
1 st Decline -18	1 st Decline -27	1 st Decline - 11	1 st Decline - 32	N/A	N/A
2 nd Decline-45	2 nd Decline - 47	2 nd Decline - 37	2 nd Decline - 27	Decline - 35	N/A
Accept - 71	Accept -53	Accept - 46	Accept - 38	Accept - 11	N/A

**Please note during 2020 CM Health's routine service delivery for this was severely impacted by the Whakaari/White Island eruption and Covid-19.*

3. What is the most common reason breast reduction applications have been denied?

Common reasons breast reduction applications are denied at first referral stage are likely due to the patient's BMI being higher than 30 and/or they are currently smoking. On review by our Restricted Procedures Panel, the main reason for decline will be "Decline- does not reach our access threshold". The Plastics Service gets more referrals for routine plastic surgery procedures (including breast reduction) then we have capacity to treat, therefore we need to manage access for patients who have the highest need and potential to benefit from the surgery.

During the period December 2019 to April 2020 - all routine referrals were declined due to the impact that the Whakaari/White Island eruption had on the service and to ensure we were able to catch up with commitments made to patients. From May 2020, the service started accepting routine procedures again.

4. How many breast reduction surgeries have been performed in each of those years, 2016-2020, as well as so far this year?

The number of breast reduction surgeries performed are detailed below.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
42	46	54	57	43	10

5. What is the average wait time for each patient between first application and the completion of surgery, again broken down by year?

The information provided above shows the average wait time in days for a patient after being waitlisted for surgery (after being seen at their clinic appointment). We are unable to provide specific information about waiting time to first see a specialist as referrals are made to a generic plastic surgery code and is not information that is routinely collected by CM Health.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
160 days	180 days	141 days	320 days	269 days	121 days

6. How many patients are currently waitlisted for breast reduction surgery?

There are six (6) patients currently waitlisted for breast reduction surgery.

I trust this information answers your request. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Watson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Peter Watson
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health