

30th June 2021

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Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Joint Replacements

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 31st March 2021, you requested 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 orthopedic surgeon?
3. Of those who had their first appointment with the specialist orthopedic 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 GP and had a first specialist appointment with an orthopedic surgeon, how many actually had their surgery with the DHB?
6. How many patients were deemed clinically necessary to go on a waiting list for joint replacement that year?
7. How many referrals from the GP and specialist for joint replacements were turned down that year?
8. How many were turned down because of 'lack of capacity'?
9. Can you specify your DHBs criteria for joint surgery?
10. How many points do patients need to get onto the waiting list for joint replacement in your DHB?
11. How many 'semi urgent' referrals from the GP to DHB for ENT (ears, nose throat) were actually seen by a specialist?

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.

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 orthopedic surgeon?

Current system limitations mean that it is not possible to determine the sub-specialty a patient has been referred to within the orthopaedic service. Referrals to Orthopaedics are not further sub-categorised on the system. For clarity, patients are not directly referred for joint replacements by GP's, a GP refers the patient to the orthopaedic service for an assessment.

3. Of those who had their first appointment with the specialist orthopedic surgeon, how many were then referred/sent back to their GP?

- In 2017, there was a total of 121 patients discharged to their GP.
- In 2020 there was a total of 23 patients discharged 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?

- In 2017 CM Health completed 736 hip and knee joint replacements.
- In 2020 CM Health completed 874 hip and knee joint replacements.

5. Of those who were referred by GP and had a first specialist appointment with an orthopedic surgeon, how many actually had their surgery with the DHB?

Due to the limitations mentioned in question 1, CM Health is unable to specify how many of the above patients who received joint replacements were originally referred by GP.

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

- In 2017, 379 patients were referred for total hip joint replacement, and 612 patients were referred for total knee joint replacement.
- In 2020, 418 patients were referred for total hip joint replacement and 706 patients were referred for total knee joint replacement.

7. How many referrals from the GP and specialist for joint replacements were turned down that year?

- In 2017, 45 patient referrals were declined due to them being medically unfit for surgery.
- In 2020, 97 patient referrals were declined for the same reason.

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

- In 2017, there were 64 patients who were declined for joint replacement surgery based on capacity.
- In 2020, there were 53 patients who were declined for joint replacement surgery based on capacity.

9. Can you specify your DHBs criteria for joint surgery?

Once an orthopaedic surgeon has reviewed a patient and decided that the patient may benefit from surgery, acceptance to the surgical waiting list is based on meeting a threshold using the following National Scoring Tool questionnaire which is split into two parts:

- The 'Patient Impact on Life' questionnaire completed by the patient. This questionnaire scores on six areas which are; social intervention, personal intervention, ability to fulfil the responsibilities to others, personal care, personal safety and leisure activities.
- The 'Surgeon Derived Impact on Patient' Questionnaire is completed by the surgeon who recommends the patient for surgery and scores the patient on five areas which are impact of pain and functional compromise, likelihood of deterioration in symptoms, consequence of deterioration in symptoms/function, amount of benefit from the proposed surgery and risk of surgery for the patient.

When entered into a Ministry of Health (MoH) electronic system a score is generated based on individual weightings built into the system. The scoring system applies to all orthopaedic sub-specialities and is not specifically for hip and knee.

Patients whose score meets the threshold for surgery, then follow an anaesthetic review process for clearance of medical appropriateness before progressing to the surgical waitlist. The figures provided are based on patients who are accepted (through both scoring tool and anaesthetic clearance), and those declined (reflecting scoring tool declines only, no record of other reasons for not making the waiting list is currently available).

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

A patient needs 65 points on the Ministry of Health scoring tool system.

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

In 2017 there were 1325 semi-urgent referrals received and waitlisted from general practitioners with 993 of those having subsequent FSA outpatient appointments. This gives a referral to FSA rate of 74.9%. In 2020 the rate is slightly higher at 79.3%

	Referrals Received	Attended appointments	% Referral to FSA rate
2017	1325	993	74.9%
2020	1068	847	79.3%

Data Sourced 29/06/2021: Health Intelligence & Informatics

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



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health