



Hospital Services

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

9 March 2021

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Flexing of theatres and delayed surgeries

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 10 February 2021 seeking information about flexing of theatres and delayed surgeries from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB).

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 8,500 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 can provide the following information:

- 1. I was looking for some specifics on when the operating rooms have been flexed down recently because of staff capacity. Can you please tell me how many times that has happened this year?**

Waitematā DHB provides surgical operating services at three sites: North Shore and Waitakere hospitals as well as the Elective Surgical Centre (ESC) at our North Shore campus.

Since January 2021, Waitematā DHB has had some vacancies for nursing staff which are being recruited into. These vacancies have meant that, on occasion, some operating rooms have been flexed down and non-urgent surgeries have been postponed. In these instances, priority is given to patients who present with clinical urgency, to ensure care is provided within appropriate timeframes.

However, this has not affected our overall planned care volumes year-to-date (YTD), as we have managed to make up any lost volumes that have occurred due to this flexing.

We are currently on track for our elective surgical volumes on a year-to-date basis. This year, compared with the same period last year, we have delivered 451 more planned care volumes (about 5% more), together with an additional 348 acute events in the planned care specialties (see Table 1).

Table 1: Theatre events YTD

Theatre events	Planned care elective	Acute (unplanned)	Total
FY20 YTD February 2020	8,251	6,321	14,572
FY21 YTD February 2021	8,702	6,669	15,371
Increase	451	348	799

Planned care and acute surgical specialties include Orthopaedics, Gynaecology, Cardiology, ORL, General Surgery including AIR, and Urology. All Waitematā DHB theatres (three sites). Source: Qlik data 9/3/2021. MN.

It should be noted that the months of January and February are influenced by both statutory and Christmas holiday elective theatre closures. February 2021 was also unique in that an Alert Level 3 COVID-19 lockdown was in place in the Auckland region from 14 to 17 February and Alert Level 2 from the 18 to 22 February.

The number of times operating rooms have been flexed down due to staff capacity, since 5 January 2021 is 42, as follows:

Table 2: Number of theatre sessions cancelled from 5 January to 10 February 2021

Week commencing (Monday to Friday)	Number of theatre sessions
5 January	8
11 January	1
18 January	11
25 January	10
1 February	9
8 -10 February	3
Total	42

2. Can you please tell me how many surgeries have been postponed?

On average, between two to four patients per theatre session are postponed as a result of a theatre being “flexed down”, depending on the complexity of the procedure. These patients are re-scheduled to the next suitable and available theatre list.

3. What types of procedures they are

All procedures cancelled and re-scheduled were clinically assessed as priority three (P3), non-cancer cases.

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