

15 November 2021

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Re Official Information Request for Endometriosis and Back Pain Data

I refer to your official information request dated 21 October 2021 for the following information

1. **Of all the patients with pelvic pain seen by a specialist in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time for that appointment?**
2. **Of all the patients with pelvic pain seen by a specialist in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time for that appointment?**
3. **In the last 12 months how many patients have seen a specialist at the DHB for pelvic pain?**
4. **In the last 12 months, how many patients have been transferred to another hospital to treat possible endometriosis? How many specialists does the DHB have available to diagnose and treat pelvic pain and possible endometriosis?**
5. **Of the patients who had advanced laparoscopic surgery to treat suspected endometriosis in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time to get that operation?**
6. **Of the patients who had laparoscopic surgery to treat pelvic pain in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time to get that operation?**
7. **A copy of the DHBs clinical pathway to treat suspected endometriosis.**
8. **Of the patients who saw a specialist with serious back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time for that appointment?**
9. **Of the patients who saw a specialist with serious back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time for that appointment?**
10. **Of the patients who had orthopedic surgery to treat back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time for that appointment?**
11. **Of the patients who had orthopedic surgery to treat back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time for that operation?**

We have provided the information under each of your questions below.

Response

1. Of all the patients with pelvic pain seen by a specialist in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time for that appointment?

We are unable to give you the average wait time for new appointments. Assembling it would require the review of individual clinical records of patients.

Due to the sensitivity of this information, frontline clinical staff would need to review hundreds of individual clinical files and it would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records. This would take the frontline staff away from their clinical work and prejudice our ability to provide core clinical services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to this aspect of your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. We have, therefore, decided to refuse this question under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act, due to substantial collation and research.

We can tell you that the waiting times will depend on the time recommended by the member of the triage team. Patients with pelvic pain may be triaged into different appointment times according to their clinical need. There would be appointment times recommended for within 2-4 weeks, 4-8 weeks or within 8-16 weeks.

We have two parts to the Women's Health pain service and one is a clinic with anaesthetists and gynaecologists and the second one is for gynaecologists only. We have looked at the number of times a patient in our Women's Health pain service did not get offered an appointment within the recommended times as described above. At no time did this occur in our service October 2020 to September 2021.

Over the time period requested the majority of people with pain were seen within the times requested by the triage team. For example in the month of July every patient got their appointment within the recommended time frame.

2. Of all the patients with pelvic pain seen by a specialist in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time for that appointment?

We do not have data for the shortest time. The longest a patient with pelvic pain has had to wait is 4 months. Determining the shortest time would require the review of individual clinical records of patients which we decline to do, for the reason stated above in answering Q. 1.

3. In the last 12 months how many patients have seen a specialist at the DHB for pelvic pain?

There were 368 appointments for pain clinics with anaesthetists and gynaecologists. There were 574 appointments for patients with pelvic pain who were seen by a gynaecologist only (gynaecology clinic).

4. In the last 12 months, how many patients have been transferred to another hospital to treat possible endometriosis?

We do not have that information but we do not transfer patients to another DHB unless they no longer reside in our service. Determining transfer data would require the review of individual clinical records of patients which we decline to do, for the reason stated above in answering Q. 1.

5. How many specialists does the DHB have available to diagnose and treat pelvic pain and possible endometriosis?

Six specialists who are gynecologists and four specialists who are anesthetists.

6. Of the patients who had advanced laparoscopic surgery to treat suspected endometriosis in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time to get that operation?

We do not have average numbers. Determining this would require the review of individual clinical records of patients which we decline to do, for the reason stated above in answering Q. 1.

We can give data by month on the numbers of patients who did not get their surgery within the recommended time which is usually 4 months. Some of these patients may have had other reasons for advanced laparoscopic surgery but the majority are for endometriosis. These following numbers are at the end of each month. They would usually be operated on as a priority in the following two months so the maximum time is approximately 6 months. There is variation in the numbers because of each month's holiday periods and August reflects the impact of the COVID lockdown.

October 2020	7 cases
November 2020	2 cases
December 2020	30 cases
January 2021	11 cases
February 2021	33 cases
March 2021	28 cases
April 2021	15 cases
May 2021	9 cases
June 2021	6 cases
July 2021	3 cases
August 2021	29 cases

7. Of the patients who had laparoscopic surgery to treat pelvic pain in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time to get that operation?

We do not have the shortest time. Determining this would require the review of individual clinical records of patients which we decline to do, for the reason stated above in answering Q. 1.

The longest time would be approximately 6 months (see answer for Q.5), until the recent COVID-19 lockdown when we suspended surgery for 4 weeks. Please note that until March 2020 we would have seen everyone within 4 months and treated everyone within 4 months.

8. A copy of the DHBs clinical pathway to treat suspected endometriosis.

We don't have one for Auckland DHB. A regional pathway for the region is in development, but not finalised. We do have a pathway for triage. Please see Attachment 1 *Diagnosis and Management of Endometriosis in New Zealand*

9. Of the patients who saw a specialist with serious back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time for that appointment?

We have interpreted 'serious' as suspicion of Cancer or Priority 1

Average was 37 days

10. Of the patients who saw a specialist with serious back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time for that appointment?

We have interpreted 'serious' as suspicion of Cancer or Priority 1

Longest was 43 days

Shortest was 29 days

11. Of the patients who had orthopedic surgery to treat back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the average wait time for that appointment?

221 days

12. Of the patients who had orthopedic surgery to treat back pain, in the last 12 months, what was the longest and shortest wait time for that operation?

Shortest 1 day

Longest 1003 days

Note: this was due to significant comorbidities that needed to be managed before this patient could be operated on safely.

I trust this information answers your questions.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. 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 response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ailsa Claire".

Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive