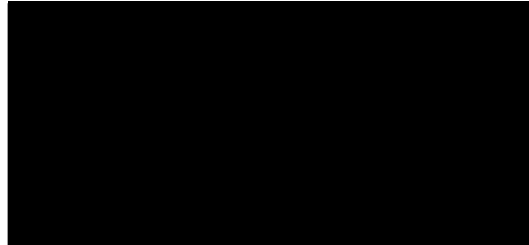


17 December 2018



Re **Official Information Request for shortage of anaesthetic technicians at Auckland DHB**

I refer to your Official Information Act request of 19 November 2018 for the following information:

- 1. How many surgeries have been cancelled in the past 12 months because of a lack of an anaesthetic technician?**
- 2. What type of surgeries were cancelled? eg, hip replacement, cancer related surgery...**
- 3. How often did the cancellation occur on the same day the surgery was supposed to go ahead?**
- 4. What was the total cost of cancellations to the DHB over the past 12 months?**
- 5. What does it cost to run a theatre per hour of surgery?**
- 6. If a theatre is ready to go and surgery cannot go ahead because of staffing, what is the cost to the DHB in terms of theatre time and person-power?**
- 7. What is the current shortage of anaesthetic technicians?**

We have provided the information under each of your questions below. By way of context, Auckland DHB, along with other DHBs across New Zealand, is actively engaged in overcoming a national shortage of anaesthetic technicians.

- 1. How many surgeries have been cancelled in the past 12 months because of a lack of an anaesthetic technicians?**

There were 65 surgeries rescheduled (deferrals) which can be attributed to a shortage of anaesthetic technicians. The total number of procedures undertaken by Auckland DHB for 2017/2018 was approximately 50,000.

2. *What type of surgeries were cancelled?*

Procedures deferred were as follows:

**Deferrals linked to shortage of anaesthetic technicians  
1 Nov 2017 to 31 Oct 2018**

Event category	Total
Anaesthesia	1
Cardiology	1
Cardiothoracic	9
Emergency Medicine Department	1
General Surgery	17
Gynaecological	2
Neurosurgery	4
Otorhinolaryngology	7
Urology	4
Adult Congenital Heart Disease (Surgical)	1
Medical Oncology	1
Ophthalmology	3
Oral Health	1
Orthopaedics	3
Paediatric Orthopaedics	3
Paediatric surgery	1
Respiratory	3
Vascular Service	3
<b>Total all cases</b>	<b>65</b>

3. *How often did the cancellation occur on the same day the surgery was supposed to go ahead?*

“Same day” applies from 2pm the day prior when surgery lists are confirmed. All deferrals linked to a shortage of anaesthetic technicians in the preceding table are classified “same day” on this basis.

4. *What was the total cost of cancellations to the DHB over the past 12 months?*

We cannot reliably cost deferred operations because cases are either substituted for those deferred or staff time is re-allocated to other tasks. Our 39 operating theatres are in constant use and cost is calculated per hour of surgery time.

5. *What does it cost to run a theatre per hour of surgery*

The average cost of running an operating theatre is \$852.61 **per hour of surgery**. This is the direct staffing cost only, including nursing staff, technical staff and administration staff. It does not include the cost of the anaesthetist, surgeon, consumables or indirect overhead.

6. *If a theatre is ready to go and surgery cannot go ahead because of staffing, what is the cost to the DHB in terms of theatre time and person power?*

Refer to question three. The “same day” reassignment of operating theatre schedules will include patients requiring procedures able to be carried out by suitably qualified staff who are available, where a technician is not needed. Costs are only allocated for the time taken to undertake a specific procedure.

7. *What is the current shortage of anaesthetic technicians?*

The current shortage of anaesthetic technicians as at the end of November 2018 was 23.89. A pool of agency anaesthetic technicians are employed to cover any shortfalls wherever possible, and ensure all acute, emergency and major surgeries can be carried out.

Auckland DHB is actively recruiting for anaesthetic technicians and providing programmes to encourage retention of existing staff. We have significantly increased our recruitment advertising efforts, have increased the number of training positions and have appointed an anaesthetic technician professional lead to provide leadership and career development within the anaesthetic technician workforce across the DHB. We have also established a professional development allowance for anaesthetic technicians to assist with retention.

Patient care and safety is always our main focus and surgery is prioritised according to clinical need.

You are entitled under the Official Information Act to seek a review of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://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 faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE  
Chief Executive

