

8 July 2019



Re Official Information Request – Wait times for cancer treatment

I refer to your official information request dated 24 June 2019 requesting the following information:

The Sunday programme would like to request some information regarding wait times for cancer treatment.

- 1. Have any people been harmed as a result of oncology and / or radiation wait times? If so, how many?**

We have no documented evidence to suggest that any people have been harmed. In order to provide clinically safe systems we meet weekly to manage demand and capacity, using robust service level information so that we have visibility of demand and can manage areas of increase and reduce risk to patients. We also hold a weekly prioritisation meeting where we facilitate more urgent treatment for patients who require it.

- 2. Are there any reports that indicate and / or detail harm to patients as a result of oncology service wait times or radiation wait times? Can you supply those report(s)?**

We utilise the DHB-wide datix system to record any instances of patient harm within our service – inception April 2017. Since this time there have been no Severity Assessment Code (SAC) 1's or 2's ie harm to patients as a result of medical oncology service wait times or radiation oncology wait times. Other than this, we have no specific reports that detail this information.

3. Have any reports been provided indicating patients are being compromised by wait times to access first treatment of first specialist appointment? Can you supply those reports?

We interpret this question as related to Faster Cancer Treatment, being the Ministry of Health priority for patients to receive their first cancer treatment within 62 days of the DHB receiving their referral. The Ministry requirement is for at least 90% achievement of this, and our DHB has met this since the inception of this measure. This information is available publically through the Ministry of Health website. We have no reports indicating that any patient has been compromised.

4. Have any of your staff raised concerns about the adverse effects on patients due to waiting times?

We are currently experiencing capacity constraints related to radiation therapy staffing availability, consistent with nationwide experience. This potentially impacts our ability to provide radiation therapy treatment to patients, and so we have outsourced a number of treatments to a private provider in order not to adversely impact patient waiting times. We have raised this issue with the Auckland DHB Board as a means to provide visibility of this, and oversight of the measures we have taken to rectify this. We have listed this on the Risk Register.

Our Radiation Oncology Senior Medical Officers have engaged with senior DHB leadership to note the impacts of a range of patient characteristics on the service's ability to deliver service. These include an aging population, an increasing population and increasing patient complexity. Note that we are engaged in a Regional Radiation Oncology planning process to determine how best to continue to provide clinically appropriate services to the Northern Region resident population for the next ten years.

I trust this information answers your questions.

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 response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive