

19 October 2018

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Dear [REDACTED]

Re Official Information Request for waitlists for cardiac ultrasounds

Thank you for your Official Information Act request of 20 September 2018 seeking the following information:

- 1. How many people are currently waiting for a cardiac ultrasound and roughly how many are performed each week?"**
- 2. Can you please tell me how long the current wait times are for cardiac ultrasounds?
-how long is the average patient waiting?
- what is longest period of time a patient has been waiting?**
- 3. Are particular patients prioritised? How?**
- 4. Why is there currently a long wait?**

The information you have requested follows. The data refers to adult patients waiting for echocardiography, and does not include children under the care of the Paediatric and Congenital Cardiac Service. The data is current as of 21 September 2018. The data applies to outpatients only. There is no waiting list for inpatients as they are scanned as soon as possible in line with clinical need.

- 1. How many people are currently waiting for a cardiac ultrasound and roughly how many are performed each week?**

There are 768 patients on the waiting list as at 21 September 2018 for transthoracic ultrasounds. There is no set number of scans done per week. There are approximately 10,000 scans undertaken per year including inpatients and outpatients, which equates to approximately 200 per week.

2. Can you please tell me how long the current wait times are for cardiac ultrasounds?

The information below refers to standard transthoracic echocardiograms only.

Other types of cardiac ultrasound scans include transthoracic studies involving an exercise treadmill or pharmaceutical agent, and a trans-oesophageal ultrasound (TOE) carried out under sedation. Waiting times are short for the few patients undergoing stress studies and TOE examinations.

- How long is the average patient waiting?

There are 768 patients on the waiting list as 21 September 2018 for a transthoracic ultrasound. The mean time for patients on the waiting list is 51 days. The median waiting time is 44 days.

- What is longest period of time a patient has been waiting?

The longest time anyone on the current list has been waiting is 193 days.

- Are particular patients prioritised? How?

The cardiac ultrasound waiting list is managed in accordance with Ministry of Health guidelines on management of waiting lists in the public health sector. Referrals are triaged into different categories of prioritisation by a cardiologist specialising in cardiac ultrasound. The degree of priority is decided by the cardiologist, and is based on the clinical reasons supplied on the referral by the referring doctor.

Once the triaging process is performed, patients are then placed on a waitlist, with preference given to those patients whose clinical condition is adjudged to justify a more urgent appointment. Patients are given advance notice of appointments and can delay the appointment if the time is not suitable to them.

I trust this information answers your questions.

Under the Official Information Act section 28 you are entitled to seek a review of this response. 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