



New Zealand Orthopaedic Association

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Media Release – Elective Surgery Crisis

A national review of public hospital waiting lists won't solve our growing waiting lists for elective surgery says John McKie, President of the New Zealand Orthopaedic Association.

“We can't blame COVID for the ballooning waiting lists, whilst it has made the situation worse, problems have existed for many years before this pandemic.”

“Public hospital elective surgery is regularly cancelled due to high levels of acute cases which must be seen urgently. The resources used to deliver planned elective care are being used to deliver unplanned acute care. We must first focus on managing the acute load; until we do this elective surgeries will continue to be deferred.”

Mr McKie says the numbers of people waiting for elective surgery is much worse than the numbers released by the government. “In Canterbury DHB, less than 30% patients referred by their GP actually get an appointment to see a surgeon. The unmet need in our population is huge. Just looking at waiting lists won't tell you the whole story.”

The New Zealand Orthopaedic Association supports the work of the proposed taskforce, but considers it will not solve the problems with elective surgery until it first focuses on acutes. “We want to participate in the discussions and be part of the solution.”

Orthopaedic departments around New Zealand are all under pressure and lack capacity to undertake more electives. Suggestions we can move patients to other centres simply isn't practical.

“We have failed to plan and grow our health resources to match our populations' needs. New Zealanders deserve an honest conversation about this.”

For further information

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