
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health
Vancouver Coastal Health

B.C. WAIT LIST STRATEGY REDUCES HIP AND KNEE WAIT TIMES

VICTORIA – Patient wait times for hip and knee surgeries have dropped dramatically in the last year, announced Health Minister George Abbott today.

“We are delivering on our commitment to provide thousands more surgeries for British Columbians,” said Abbott. “The Province’s innovative \$60.5-million wait time strategy is helping to reduce backlogs for hip and knee surgery while building long-term capacity in the health-care system that will maximize the number of surgeries.”

Latest surgical data for April 2006 show that:

- Median wait times for hip surgeries are down by 15 per cent to 19.9 weeks in 2005/06 from 23.4 weeks in 2004/05; and
- Median wait times for knee surgeries are down by 12 per cent to 25.6 weeks in 2005/06 from 29.1 weeks in 2004/05.

The Province’s \$60.5-million wait time management strategy included \$25 million for health authorities to immediately increase the number of surgeries with a focus on joint replacement surgery. The strategy also included \$25 million for a new Centre for Surgical Innovation at UBC Hospital to support dedicated operating rooms to clear patient backlogs for hip and knee surgery.

Since opening on April 3, 2006, the UBC Hospital Centre (UBCH) has carried out over 205 procedures. Of these, around 60 per cent have been hip procedures, with the rest being knee replacement surgeries.

“These numbers will clearly impact the size of the hip and knee waitlist in B.C. as these are all patients who would still be waiting for their procedure had Vancouver Coastal Health and the Ministry of Health not collaborated to make this centre a reality,” VCH president and CEO Ida Goodreau said. “They are also particularly encouraging as they reflect a provincewide solution to lengthy waitlists, and confirm that as capacity is ramped up, the UBCH Centre is well on target to complete 1,600 hip and knee procedures by March 31, 2007.”

Of the 205 surgeries carried out by May 26, 31 per cent (64 procedures) were on residents of Fraser Health; 19 per cent (39 procedures) on people from Interior Health communities; eight per cent (17 procedures) on residents of Vancouver Island; four per cent (nine procedures) on Northern Health residents; and 38 per cent (76 procedures) on residents of communities served by Vancouver Coastal Health.

Along with the surgical outputs, the UBCH Centre is also changing the way surgical operating rooms are run to ensure more efficient use of resources and, ultimately, improved patient care. The average time per surgery is now closer to of two hours – shorter than when such procedures are carried out in a non-specialized setting.

“The average time a patient now spends in post-surgical recovery is already well below the target of two hours and 30 minutes,” according to Dr. Bas Masri, head of reconstructive orthopedics at UBCH and Surgical Leader for the CSI initiative. “We are also achieving other efficiencies such as the average length of stay per patient being below the target for both hip (3.25 days) and knee (2.96 days) procedures, demonstrating the successful links being built between the acute care surgical component and post-operative care.”

The new centre is also getting a thumbs-up from patients. Every person who goes through the VCH Centre at UBC Hospital is contacted for his or her impressions and comments as part of the ongoing quality assurance process. So far, patients have ranked their experience highly with an average ranking of 4.7 out of five for areas such as surgical outcomes, pre- and post-operative treatment, quality of care, and follow-up.

Even more patients from around BC will access the Centre in the coming months, as orthopedic surgeons from across the province perform hip and knee surgeries at the UBC Hospital facility. There are currently 18 surgeons confirmed to perform work at the Centre (eight from Interior Health; six from VCH; three from Fraser Health; and one from Vancouver Island). The use of the facility by surgeons from across the province will continue to provide improved access for patients from throughout B.C. and familiarize them with specialized techniques and clinical protocols they can apply in their own communities.

The Province is working hard to manage wait times down. About half of all surgeries are done immediately and are never wait-listed because they are determined to be emergency or urgent cases. About 75 per cent of elective surgeries on the wait list are done in just over three months.

Surgical wait times are published on the Ministry of Health website at:
www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/waitlist/

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