

CORPORATE OFFICE

Level 1
32 Oxford Terrace
Christchurch Central
CHRISTCHURCH 8011

Telephone: 0064 3 364 4134
Kathleen.Smithram@cdhb.health.nz

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RE Official Information Act request CDHB 10756

I refer to your email dated 18 November 2021 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB. I note that your request was revised on the 30 November 2021 and 1 December 2021 as below: Specifically:

Medical Oncology Department - as at 10/12/2021

1. How many people are waiting for treatment in the medical oncology department?

a. Of those waiting, how many are waiting for a first treatment, following a First Specialist Appointment?

There are 192 patients waiting for treatment. Of these 105 are currently waiting for a First Specialist Appointment (FSA) and there are 87 patients who have had a First Specialist Appointment (FSA) and not had a first treatment or follow up.

b. What is the minimum and maximum wait time for treatment appointments?

Minimum wait time for 1 st treatment	-	1 day
Maximum wait time for 1 st treatment	-	79 days

Please note that for many patients there will be good clinical reasons for delaying treatment. Patients may have already started their treatment for cancer by having surgery or radiation therapy; some may be too frail to begin treatment straight away but can start their treatment when their overall condition improves. Others may need to complete the treatment they are currently receiving before proceeding to chemotherapy. Another reason is that some patients may have requested a delay, perhaps to take a break before starting their chemotherapy.

c. What is the CDHB doing to address this?

The Medical Oncology department regularly reviews processes, treatment protocols and patient pathways and has sought funding to support a higher capacity, more resilient service by increasing specialist nursing, pharmacy and administrative staff. When implemented this will optimise Nurse Practitioner and SMO time, improve outpatient efficiency and timeliness of Medical Oncology treatment.

2. What requests has the CDHB received for additional staff in the medical oncology department?

Four full time Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) roles, one full time pharmacist, one full time booking clerk and one full time administrator

a. How have these been responded to?

CNS roles approved Tuesday 7 December 2021, other requests will be considered next year.

Radiation Oncology Department

3. How many patients are waiting for radiation oncology treatment as at the end of November?

As at 26 November 2021 there are 223 patients waiting for their 1st Treatment after a decision to treat them has been agreed. This includes patients who have only just had an FSA and been added to the wait list.

a. How long are patients waiting for radiation oncology treatment on average, and

b. what is the minimum and maximum wait time?

Minimum – 3 days

Average – 32 days

Maximum – 63 days

Note: the Faster Cancer Treatment (FCT) target set by the Ministry for patients triaged as having a high suspicion of cancer and a need to be seen urgently is 62 days from receipt of referral in secondary care to 1st treatment.

As explained previously for medical oncology patients, for some radiation therapy patients there are good clinical reasons for delaying their treatment start date. They may have already started their treatment for cancer by having surgery and/or chemotherapy. Some patients who are too frail to begin radiation therapy straight away may start their treatment when their overall condition improves, or they need to complete the treatment they are currently receiving before proceeding to radiation therapy. An example would be patients having radiation therapy for a head and neck cancer. They often require a dental review which may recommend extractions prior to treatment and naturally the patient needs some time to recover before their radiation therapy can begin. Other patients may have requested a delay, perhaps to take a break before starting their radiation therapy.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Canterbury DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely



Ralph La Salle
Acting Executive Director
Planning, Funding & Decision Support