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9(2)(a)

RE Official information Act request CDHB 10555

I refer to your email dated 8 March 2021 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB regarding transmasculine chest reconstruction surgery. Specifically:

- 1. The average time between acceptance onto the wait list and first appointment for patients referred to and accepted onto the waitlist for transmasculine chest reconstruction (top surgery).**

The average time from referral to clinic assessment was 4 months and the average time on the surgical waiting list was two months (i.e. time from being entered onto the waiting list until the surgery was performed).

- 2. The number of publicly funded transmasculine chest reconstruction surgery completed in the last year.**

Five gender reassignment top surgeries were performed during the 2020 calendar year. These were female to male or female to non-binary procedures. No male to female procedures were performed.

- 3. How patients are selected from the waitlist for transmasculine chest reconstruction surgery, and how often, i.e. if done by lottery how often is the lottery drawn**

Patients are selected by a number randomisation technique for selection for clinical assessment which occurs at roughly six-monthly intervals. During this clinical appointment the patient is assessed to ascertain that they are suitable for surgery, if they meet the criteria, they are added to the surgical waiting list.

The reason for the use of a number randomisation technique is to ensure equity of access is maintained, because with the decision in 2019 to provide surgery for five transgender cases per annum there was a fast uptake by informed GPs sending in referrals for their patients, creating a demand that exceeds capacity. The number randomisation technique ensures we maintain equity within and around transgender and general plastic surgery patients.

Additional information on gender reassignment surgeries is publicly available on the Canterbury HealthInfo website www.healthinfo.org.nz and there is also clinical information available for health professionals on the Canterbury HealthPathways¹ website (this is not publicly available) however we have attached an excerpt as **Appendix 1**.

4. The number of referrals for transmasculine chest reconstruction in the last year, and how many were accepted and how many declined.

We received a total of 36 referrals in 2020, of which fifteen patients were accepted. The department doesn't decline patients, they are put forward again for the random selection process as outlined in our response to question 3.

I trust 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

¹ HealthPathways is designed and written for use during a clinical consultation. Each pathway provides clear and concise guidance for assessing and managing a patient with a particular symptom or condition. Pathways also include information about making requests to services in the local health system.

Content is developed collaboratively by general practitioners, hospital clinicians, and a wide range of other health professionals. Each pathway is evidence-informed, but also reflects local reality, and aims to preserve clinical autonomy and patient choice. HealthPathways serves to reduce unwarranted variation and accelerate evidence into practice. Note: This information is not publicly available.

Gender-affirming Surgery

This page is about preparation for gender-affirming surgeries for patients aged 18 and over. See also:

- [Transgender Health in Children](#) for pre-puberty or early puberty
- [Transgender Health in Adults](#)
- [Transgender Health in Youth](#)

Background

[About gender-affirming surgery](#)

About gender-affirming surgery

While some transgender people are comfortable with the expression of their gender identity without some form of surgery, for others surgery is essential to alleviate their body dysphoria and/or live fully and authentically in their gender.¹

Canterbury DHB offers a range of feminising and masculinising surgeries. Genital reconstruction surgery is not provided in Canterbury, but patients from Canterbury DHB can be referred to the Gender Affirming (Genital) Surgery Service via a DHB specialist or any general practitioner. There is currently 1 surgeon (based in Auckland) providing genital reconstruction surgery in New Zealand, so the waiting list is long.

Assessment

1. Measure body mass index (BMI).
2. Check if the patient meets the current inclusion criteria for surgery:
 - [Chest reconstruction surgery](#) – either mastectomy or augmentation.

Chest reconstruction surgery

- Persistent, well documented gender dysphoria, having completed 1 psychological/psychiatric assessment. The readiness for hormones assessment done prior to hormones is acceptable. A patient that has not had an assessment would require a formal assessment.
- Capacity to make fully informed decision and to consent for treatment.
- Aged 18 years or over
- 2 or more years of hormone therapy (not a pre-requisite for mastectomy/masculinising chest surgery).

- Significant reduction in quality of life. See [Ministry of Health Impact on Life Scale](#).

Ministry of Health Impact on Life Scale

- [English](#) (see below example)
- [Cook Island](#)
- [Hindi](#)
- [Māori](#)
- [Simplified Chinese](#)
- [Traditional Chinese](#)

The questionnaire should be filled out by the general practitioner or nurse with the patient.

- If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be reasonably controlled
- Non-smoker and [nicotine-free](#) for longer than 3 months

Nicotine-free

All products that contain nicotine have an adverse effect on wound healing. Patients must be smoke-free, and no longer using nicotine replacement therapy and vaping products that contain nicotine, for at least 3 months before surgery.

- BMI less than 32
- [Orchidectomy, hysterectomy, oophorectomy](#)

3. Check for [exclusion criteria](#). These patients cannot be referred.

Exclusion criteria

- Current smoker. The patient must be a non-smoker and [nicotine-free](#) for at least 3 months.
- Poorly controlled medical health, e.g. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), ischaemic heart disease (IHD), hypertension.
- Poorly controlled mental health.
- BMI greater than 32 (chest surgery only).

How does your condition affect your life?

Please tell us about how much difficulty your condition causes in different areas of your life, which may limit the things you can do. If you are telling us so about your child's experience, please answer the questions from their point of view.

Each question below includes examples to illustrate some of the things this area of life covers. It is okay if some of these examples don't apply to you. Please just think about whatever this area of life means for you (or for your child).

Please circle the number that most represents how much your (or your child's) condition affects each area of life.

How much does your condition affect your **social interactions?**

(Examples: meeting friends, going out, joining in groups, going shopping, everyday activities outside the home)

No difficulty	Little difficulty	Some difficulty	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6

How much does your condition affect your **personal relationships?**

(Examples: personal relations with partner, family members, close personal friends)

No difficulty	Little difficulty	Some difficulty	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6

How much does your condition affect your **ability to meet your responsibilities to others?**

(Examples: doing meaningful things for yourself or others, including caring for children, grandchildren or partner; work (both paid and unpaid), including how 'having to rely on others' may have an impact on you)

No difficulty	Little difficulty	Some difficulty	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6

How much does your condition affect your **personal care?**

(Examples: looking after yourself, your health, personal hygiene, need for aids or special clothing)

No difficulty	Little difficulty	Some difficulty	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6

How much does your condition affect your **personal safety?**

(Examples: being safe from injury and harm; from yourself, or others, and in your surroundings)

No difficulty	Little difficulty	Some difficulty	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6

How much does your condition affect your **leisure activities?**

(Examples: getting exercise, hobbies, sporting activities, gardening, do-it-yourself activities, crafts, travel)

No difficulty	Little difficulty	Some difficulty	Quite difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6

Patient name: _____