

2.1 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding hospital waiting lists for orthopaedic operations:

Could the Minister state how long hospital waiting lists are for public patients currently waiting for orthopaedic operations?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I am so pleased to be able to confirm that 92 per cent of patients scheduled for routine surgery are operated on within the 3 month waiting time target. The 146 patients waiting longer than this equate to approximately 8 per cent of the total on the list. These patients have been categorised as requiring non-urgent treatment, as all urgent cases are seen well within the waiting list time targets. To provide some context, I should confirm in this year to date my department has undertaken a total of 2,300 orthopaedic procedures. Of these 1,800 were elective procedures. That is for patients included on the waiting list, with a balance of 500 being the result of trauma and accidents.

2.1.1 The Deputy of Grouville:

Would it surprise the Minister for Health and Social Services to know that patients in constant pain, being prescribed painkillers to take on a daily basis, are being given an average of 8 months as a wait time for operations? Would it also surprise her to know that patients in need of hip replacements who cannot work because of their condition are being told they have to wait to the age of 60 before they are entitled to the operation? In some cases this means 12 years on income support.

The Deputy of Trinity:

It does surprise me. The consultants, when they get a referral letter from the G.P. (General Practitioner), triage patients in the cases of those needing urgent treatment or elective treatments. Really it is the G.P., the patient and the consultant that need to sort out ... it is difficult for them and I quite understand that, but it is the consultants that triage the patients when they receive referral letter from G.P.s.

2.1.2 The Deputy of Grouville:

There is obviously a disconnect between the 3-month waiting list that the Minister for Health and Social Services has been told and what some patients who have contacted me are being told at the hospital. Would she undertake to look at this situation, so that people in need of operations are only subject to a 3-month wait for their operations?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Some orthopaedic operations are very complex and they can only be performed by a specific consultant. As I said, the maximum current wait is 8 months. This just relates to one person, who is being operated on next month. But if the Deputy wishes to give me some information then I certainly will look into it.

2.1.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I too have had anecdotal information that for certain medical diagnostic specialities there is a waiting list of one year. Would the Minister circulate to all Members a list of surgical and medical specialties and the associated waiting lists, please?

The Deputy of Grouville:

Yes, I can.

2.1.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

That was very much along the lines of what I was going to ask. I would like to ask, when the Minister is circulating this list to all States Members, could we have comparisons with the United Kingdom? I was recently, on this weekend, told of a man who has been diagnosed with cancer having to wait 90 days for an endoscopy.

[09:45]

The Deputy of Trinity:

I can do that, but it might not be ... creating pears and apples, because we have to wait sometimes for some specialist consultants, especially the orthopaedic ones coming from the U.K. (United Kingdom). But in relation to the person that you were talking about, if the Deputy wishes to give me some information, then again I will look into it.

2.1.5 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

Briefly on the supplementary, I definitely will be taking this up with the Minister. But if she is unable to give us like-for-like comparisons in relation to surgical treatments that require specialists to be flown in - we do not require that for endoscopy - could we at least be given the endoscopy waiting times in the U.K. compared to the endoscopy times for Jersey. Especially when someone has cancer and they have to wait 90 days.

The Deputy of Trinity:

Absolutely, yes.

2.1.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

I wonder if the Minister again could confirm that some of the real delays are occurring between the G.P. visit and the arrangement of a consultant's interview. Could she tell us what the real delays are in that area, which make the 3 months sometimes look a bit tame?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I do not have those figures, but again I can attach them with the figures that Senator Ferguson has asked me for.

2.1.7 The Deputy of Grouville:

Just that I would welcome the information asked for by Senator Ferguson, but would the Minister for Health and Social Services not agree that there is some disconnect between the information that she has been given, that waiting lists are 3 months and the actual time that patients in pain are being given is 8 months? Would she not agree that there is a disconnect here; there is misinformation?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Again, if the Deputy has that information I would very much welcome it. These are the figures that I have. The Orthopaedic Department is very busy, as I said, with over 2,300 operations up to this date and 92 per cent of the patients are operated on within the 3 months' waiting time target. That includes the Day Surgery Unit as well as main theatres.