

21.01.19

23 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding non-Covid activity in the Hospital (OQ.17/2021):

Will the Minister update members on the activity that is taking place in the Hospital to address routine elective and urgent treatments; will he provide the latest waiting lists for surgery for December 2020 compared to December 2019, and state what alternative treatment, if any, is offered in the event of patients being turned away from the Hospital?

The following response was provided in writing in accordance with Standing Order 63(9) as the oral question was not asked before the end of the time allowed for Oral Questions:

From early December there was a requirement to cease routine elective operating in response to increasing Covid activity on the Island. However, operating on urgent elective patients has always been maintained, along with all emergency surgery.

As of 18th of January 2021, the hospital is recommencing routine elective inpatient surgical work. Routine daycase surgery was reintroduced in the week commencing the 4th of January for both urgent and routine cases.

At the end of December 2019 there were 2,511 patients on the Inpatient Waiting List, which compares to 2,637 at the end of 2020. The increase of 126 is not significant given that within the first wave of Covid, routine operating was not performed during April, May and June. Many Trusts on the mainland have failed to return to normal activity after the first wave and in the national news we read reports that it may take four years to recover their waiting list position to that of pre Covid.

During the first wave, inpatient waiting list peaked at 2,829 patients waiting surgery at the end of May, with the teams working exceptionally hard to bring it down to 2,637 by the end of December.

We must acknowledge that a number of patients have refused admission dates, telling us that they do not wish to have their operation until there is no Covid on the Island or because they are not prepared to isolate for the short period ahead of their elective admission. Whilst we need to respect islanders' choices, this adds a further challenge for the teams when trying to select patients for admission and manage the waiting lists.

The teams within the hospital monitor our waiting lists weekly, ensuring that priority is given to urgent cases, reviewing individual patient cases with the clinical teams regularly. Each Doctor is sent their waiting lists on a weekly basis for their continual review and input. To assist with managing the lists we have adjusted our theatre timetables to support increased operating capacity for the specialities with the longest waits and where we have been able to we have undertaken additional operating lists.

We do not turn people away who need treatment. In terms of alternative treatment, this is not really an option. We cannot refer patients off-Island for routine care as most other healthcare providers have not returned to delivering the same level of care that they were pre-March 2020, so therefore have no capacity to support additional work.