

## **Elective Surgery wait lists – what it means for Wairarapa** *Surgery delays are likely for some time yet*

23 October 2019

**Chief Medical Officer, Shawn Sturland explains the challenges behind our surgical wait lists at Wairarapa Hospital.**

*What forced the Code Red situation yesterday was a surge of acute (unplanned) cases, at the expense of planned work. That directly affects our waitlist for elective (planned) procedures. We are now exceeding the Ministry of Health guideline for 4 months wait.*

*When we have a high-pressure point of need, our wait lists grow. This causes extra work to reschedule, and causes disruption to patients. It also means the time it will take to ‘operate our way out’ is pushed out, because usual business as usual demand does not stop in the meantime so we can catch up. Our waitlists can grow quickly, but they shrink slowly.*

*Industrial action also takes its toll. When we have to manage staff striking, we have to delay surgery.*

*But it is not just increased demand and strikes that affect waitlists. For us, there is a broader picture that involves a shortage of Senior Medical Officers – especially General*

*Surgeons and Orthopaedic Surgeons, and Allied Health specialties, like Sonographers. In some cases, there are nationwide shortages, so recruiting to Wairarapa is increasingly difficult.*

*There is a rapid rise in wait lists for orthopaedic procedures, which means patients may experience pain for longer, and have an extended loss of function. Some people will be waiting many months for routine surgery.*

### **What are we doing to address these issues?**

*Recruiting, so we are at full contingent - hiring into roles that allow us to deal with acute emergent demand (business as usual emergency care) as well as planned work.*

*We are also looking at regional collaboration. Having a well-connected regional service is a significant focus for us.*

*For more information:*

*Anna Cardno, Communications Manager  
Wairarapa DHB*

*027 205 2422*