

11 September 2020

Renoh Chalakkal

Via email: fyi-request-13623-42af0f05@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Chalakkal

Re: Official Information Act Request 2003

I refer to your Official Information Act request received on 1 September 2020 in which you specifically requested the following:

I would like to know the details about the current referral system followed by Southern DHB in ophthalmology referrals. I have the following questions:

- 1. How are the ophthalmology referrals prioritized?**
Referrals are triaged by a consultant Ophthalmologist against criteria determined by the department to ensure consistency.
- 2. Is there any automatic referral system in place?**
There is no automatic referral system in place.
- 3. Are there any standards or operating procedures that are followed while placing referrals from GPs/primary care providers?**
There are national referral guidelines for glaucoma.
- 4. Can private eye care providers (Specsavers/OPSM etc.) refer a patient to specialist ophthalmologists in Southern DHB?**
Yes, private eye care providers can refer a patient to Southern DHB Ophthalmologists.
- 5. Can a patient consult with a specialist ophthalmologist at the ED directly without an appointment? If not can a GP immediately refer a patient to a specialist ophthalmologist at the hospital? Are there any specialist ophthalmologists available in ED 24*7?**
If a patient presents to ED, and the ED staff refer to Ophthalmology, they would be assessed by the acute Ophthalmology registrar. The Ophthalmology register would present the patient to the Ophthalmologist if clinically required after their initial assessment. Ophthalmologists operate a 24/7 on call roster, but are not based out of ED.
- 6. What criteria are followed in prioritizing the ophthalmology referrals?**
In general Southern District Health Board use a template proforma triage sheet to triage patients.
- 7. In 2019-2020, what is the average time taken for a GP referral for different types (serious, moderately serious, and not serious, etc.) priorities to get an appointment with a specialist ophthalmologist/optometrist?**
Acute patients are seen as needed by the acute Ophthalmology registrar.

Other non-urgent patient referrals are seen well within the four month First Specialist Assessment target. The triaging Ophthalmologist will indicate a timeframe in which the patient must be seen when they triage.

8. How many specialist ophthalmologists and optometrists are practicing in Southern DHB separately?

Dunedin has 4.9 FTE Ophthalmologist and 1 FTE Optometrist.

Southland has 2.0 FTE Ophthalmologist

9. How many registered ophthalmologists/optometrists are there in whole New Zealand?

Southern District Health Board is unable to answer this question.

10. Were there any steps taken by DHBs across New Zealand (or at least by Southern DHB) to conduct the ophthalmology clinics remotely over tele-platforms so that patients get necessary eye care during the different stages of lockdown in New Zealand?

Telehealth in Ophthalmology is difficult due to the need to physically examine the patient. We are interested in exploring the possibility of telehealth for Ophthalmology.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of our decision by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's Office can be contacted on 0800 802 602 or on-line at <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Fleming', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Chris Fleming
Chief Executive Officer