

Corporate Monitoring Information Release

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

14th March 2000

Northern Ireland Waiting Lists – December 1999

This information release gives details of the number of people waiting for inpatient or outpatient treatment at hospitals in Northern Ireland at the end of December 1999, the most recent quarter for which figures are available.

Inpatients

Headline Totals – Table 1

The total number of patients waiting to be admitted to hospitals in Northern Ireland at the end of December 1999 stood at 46,090.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of December 1999 with the end of September 1999 (46,432), the total number waiting has fallen by 342 (<-1%).

Over the year, comparing the end of December 1999 with the end of December 1998 (45,727), the total number waiting has increased by 363 (<1%).

Table 1: Quarterly Waiting Lists – December 1999

Waiting for:	Quarter ending December 1999	Change compared with end previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter – previous year
Ordinary admissions	24,144	- 37	+ 42
Day case admissions	21,946	- 305	+ 321
Total Waiting	46,090	- 342	+ 363

Source: CHI

The figures in this bulletin include private patients and also patients resident outside Northern Ireland. At the end of December 1999, the waiting list for these patients stood at 45,405, representing an increase of 2.0% since the end of December 1998 (see Table 4).



Detailed notes and definitions are shown in the attached Notes to Editors.

Numbers Waiting for Ordinary Admission and Day Case Treatment

People on the inpatient waiting list in Northern Ireland can be waiting for admission to hospital as day cases or as ordinary admissions.

Of the 46,090 people waiting for admission to hospital at the end of December 1999, 24,144 (52.4%) were waiting for ordinary admission and 21,946 (47.6%) were waiting for day case admission (Table 1).

Since the end of September 1999, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has decreased by <1% (37) and the number waiting for day case admission has decreased by 1.4% (305).

In comparison with December 1998, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has increased by <1% (42) and the number waiting for day case admission has increased by 1.5% (321).

Excess Waiters¹ – Table 2

The number of excess waiters at the end of December 1999 stood at 5,281 or 11.5% of the total waiting.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of December 1999 with the end of September 1999, the number of excess waiters increased by 307 (6.2%).

Over the year, comparing the end of December 1999 with the end of December 1998, the numbers of excess waiters increased by 887 (20.2%).

Table 2 Excess Waiters¹ – December 1999

Waiting for:	Quarter ending December 1999	Change compared with end previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter – previous year
Ordinary admissions	3,748	+ 186	+ 683
Day case admissions	1,533	+ 121	+ 204
Total Waiting	5,281	+ 307	+ 887

¹See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Peak Figures

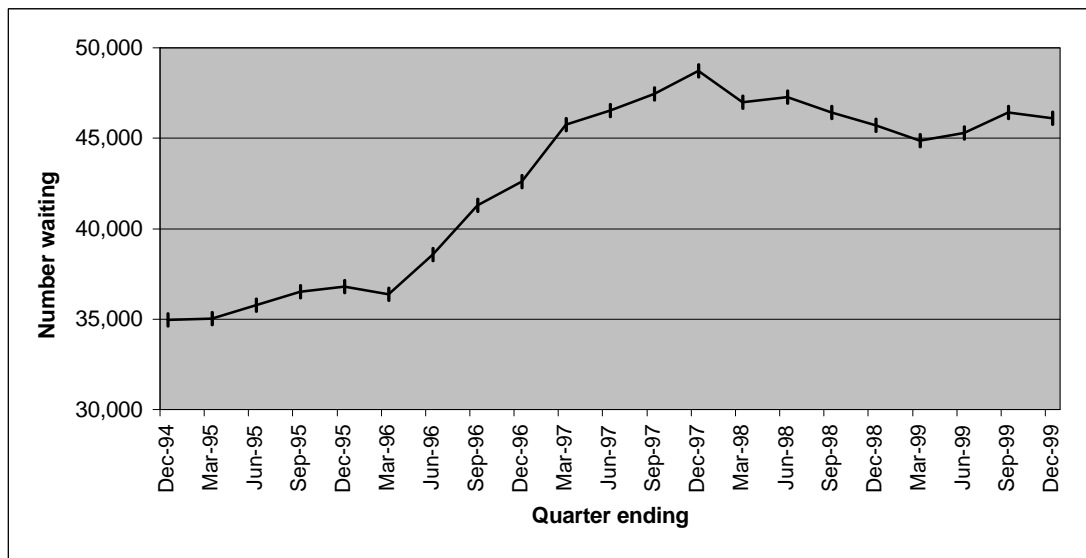
The end of December 1999 total of 46,090 on the inpatient waiting list represents a fall of 2,650 (5.4%) compared with the peak waiting list figure of 48,740 (end December 1997).

Similarly, the number of excess waiters has decreased from a peak of 6,595 at the end of December 1997 by 1,314 (19.9%) to 5,281 at the end of December 1999.

Trends

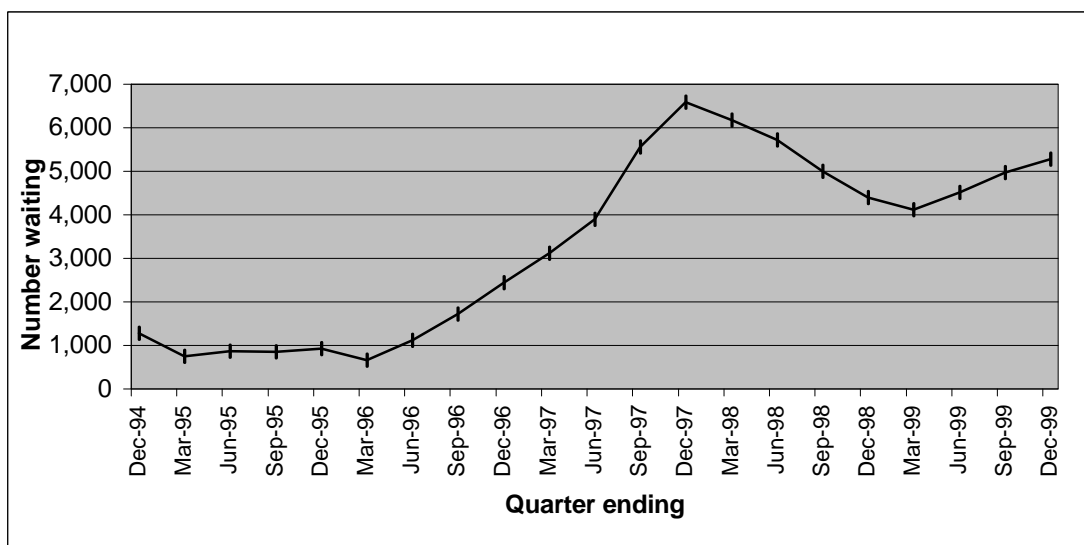
Over the past five years both the total numbers waiting and the numbers of excess waiters were on a generally upward trend until December 1997. Since then the total waiting was on a generally downward trend apart from the June/September 1999 quarters (Figure 1). Excess waiters have been rising steadily since the March 1999 quarter (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Quarterly waiting lists – Five yearly trends December 1994 –December 1999



Source: CH1

Figure 2 Excess Waiters¹ - Five yearly trends December 1994 –December 1999



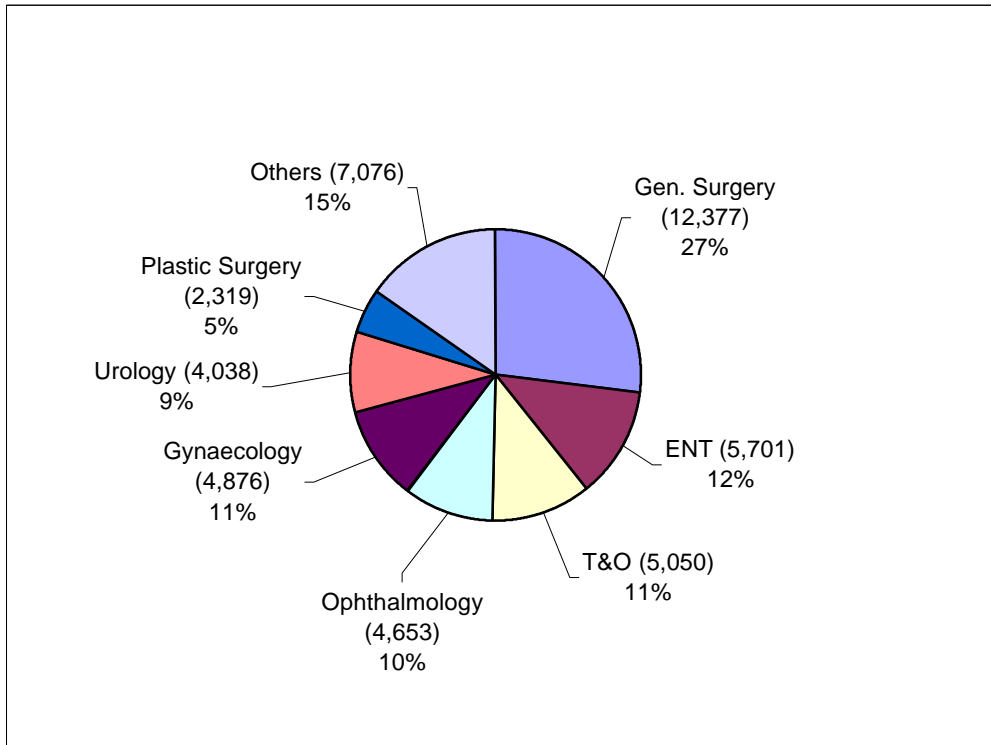
¹See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Source: CH1

Inpatients Waiting by Specialty

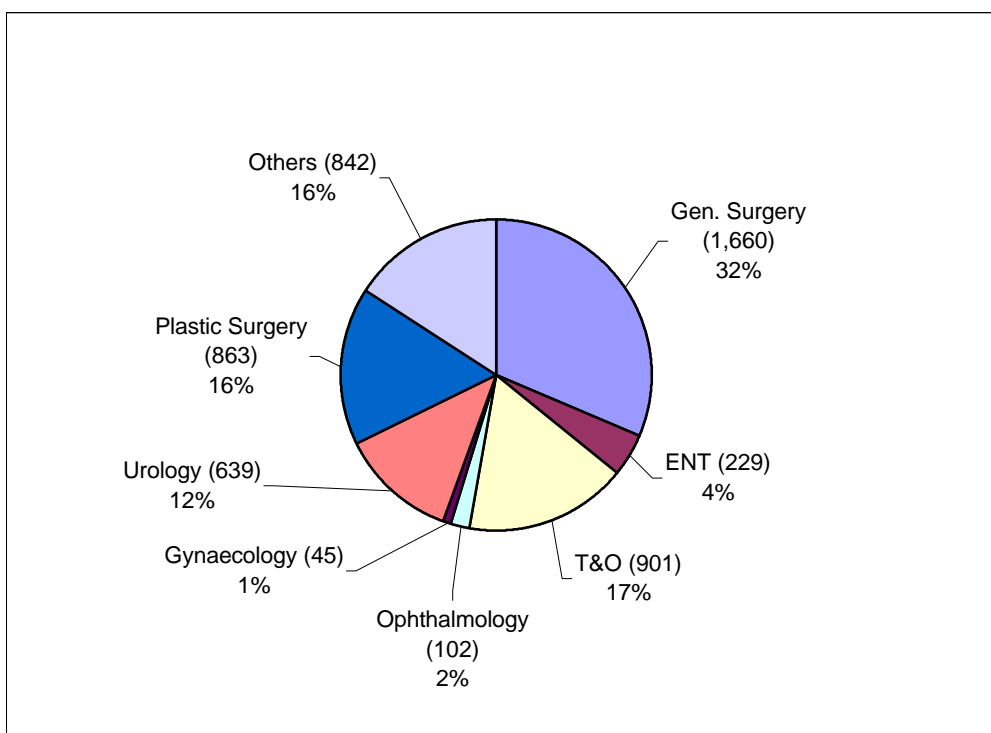
The overwhelming majority of those waiting (85%) were within seven specialties; General Surgery, ENT, Trauma & Orthopaedics, Gynaecology, Ophthalmology, Urology and Plastic Surgery (Figure 3a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 3b.

Figure 3a Inpatients - Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of December 1999



Source CH1

Figure 3b Inpatients – Excess Waiters¹ by Specialty at the end of December 1999



¹See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Source CH1

Inpatient Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed inpatient waits are shown in Table 3. A total of 35,765 inpatients were admitted to hospital (excluding those who had previously refused an offer of attendance) during the December 1999 quarter.

Table 3 Completed Inpatient Waits

Time Waiting in Months (Percentage of total waits in each time band)						
Quarter	0-2	3-11	12-17	18-23	24+	Total
Dec-96	77.9%	18.9%	2.6%	0.4%	0.2%	36,047
Mar-97	78.1%	18.5%	2.7%	0.5%	0.3%	35,578
Jun-97	76.8%	19.5%	2.8%	0.6%	0.3%	36,029
Sep-97	76.3%	19.3%	2.9%	1.0%	0.4%	32,245
Dec-97	76.7%	18.4%	3.2%	1.3%	0.5%	36,495
Mar-98	73.8%	19.6%	4.0%	1.6%	1.0%	38,848
Jun-98	74.5%	19.9%	3.1%	1.2%	1.2%	40,637
Sep-98	73.5%	21.1%	2.9%	1.2%	1.2%	34,067
Dec-98	75.1%	19.6%	3.2%	1.0%	1.1%	37,192
Mar-99	75.5%	19.8%	2.9%	0.8%	1.0%	38,185
Jun-99	75.6%	20.0%	3.0%	0.7%	0.8%	36,171
Sep-99	75.8%	20.2%	2.7%	0.7%	0.6%	33,518
Dec-99	77.0%	18.7%	2.7%	0.8%	0.7%	35,765

Source CH2 Part 1

Monthly Inpatient Waiting Lists

The Department also collects monthly data on the size of the inpatient waiting list excluding private patients and non-NI residents. These figures are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Monthly Inpatient Waiting Lists

Month Ending	Admission method		Total Waiting	Excess waiters	
	Ordinary	Day case		Number	% of total
Dec-98	23,573	20,940	44,513	4,271	9.6
Jan-99	23,539	20,797	44,336	4,136	9.3
Feb-99	23,323	20,331	43,654	4,033	9.2
Mar-99	23,415	20,037	43,452	4,003	9.2
Apr-99	23,546	20,310	43,856	4,136	9.4
May-99	23,465	20,545	44,010	4,356	9.9
Jun-99	23,549	20,430	43,979	4,382	10.0
July-99	23,854	20,982	44,836	4,574	10.2
Aug-99	23,606	21,064	44,670	4,755	10.6
Sep-99	24,511	20,752	45,263	4,827	10.7
Oct-99	23,469	21,262	44,731	4,879	10.9
Nov-99	23,257	21,263	44,520	4,853	10.9
Dec-99	21,264	24,141	45,405	5,093	11.2

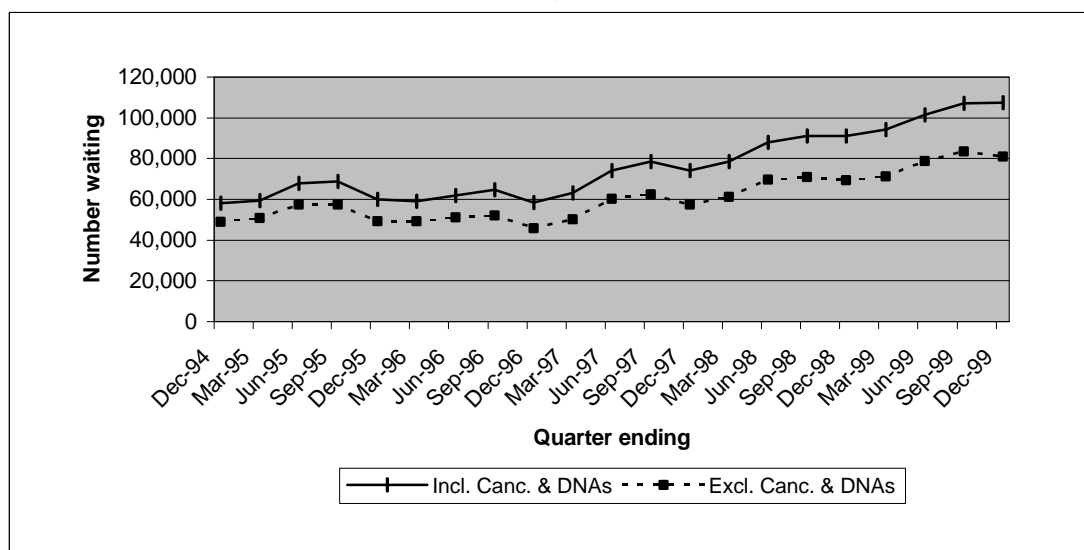
Source: CHA

Outpatients

Headline Totals

The numbers of patients waiting for admission as outpatients (including cancellations and deferrals) at the end of December 1999 stood at 107,444, representing an increase of 315 (<1%) over the quarter and an increase of 16,246 (+17.8%) compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Corresponding quarterly and annual changes (excluding cancellations and deferrals) were -2.9% and +17.0% respectively. Apart from falls in the December quarters, outpatient waiting lists have been on a generally upward trend for more than two years (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Outpatients Waiting for a First Appointment (including and excluding cancellations and deferrals) December 1994 - December 1999



Source CH3 Parts 1&2.

Outpatient Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed outpatient waits are shown in Table 5. During the December 1999 quarter a total of 82,658 outpatients attended their first appointment without having cancelled or missed a previous appointment.

Table 5 Completed Outpatient Waits for First Appointment

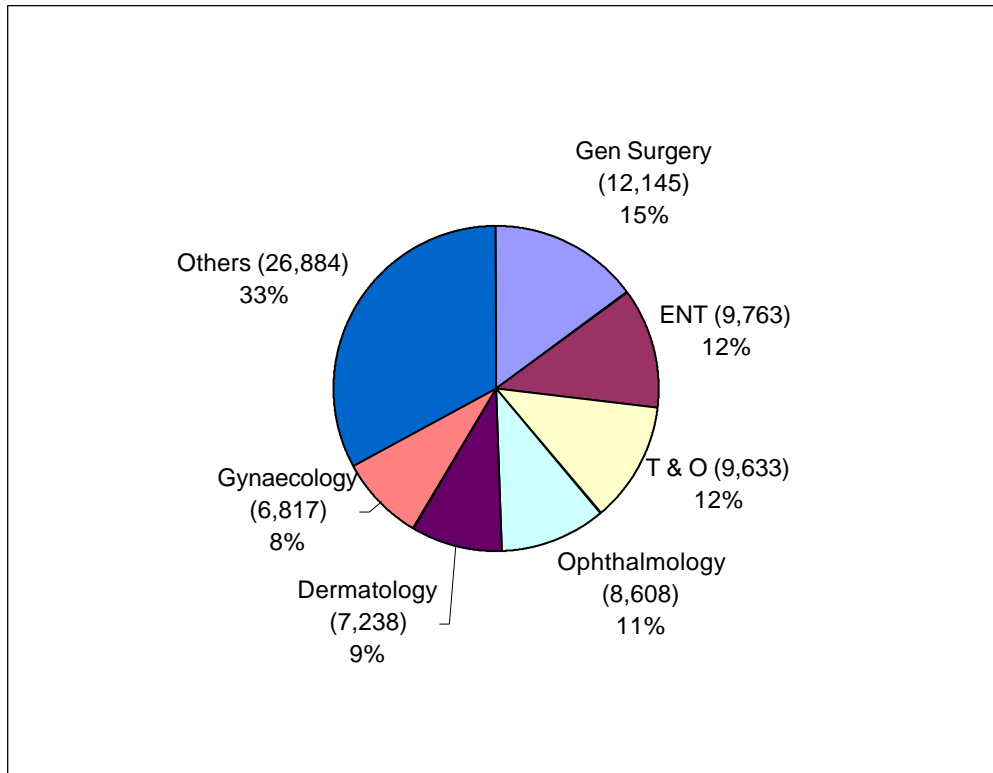
Quarter	Time Waiting in Months (Percentage of total waits in each time band)					Total
	0-2	3-11	12-17	18-23	24+	
Dec-96	86.8%	12.9%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	78,069
Mar-97	87.1%	12.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	74,296
Jun-97	87.4%	11.6%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%	75,299
Sep-97	82.7%	16.3%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%	72,137
Dec-97	81.9%	17.1%	0.9%	0.1%	0.0%	79,547
Mar-98	82.8%	16.3%	0.7%	0.2%	0.0%	78,694
Jun-98	82.9%	16.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	78,980
Sep-98	78.8%	20.6%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	73,141
Dec-98	79.4%	20.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	83,321
Mar-99	79.9%	19.2%	0.6%	0.3%	0.1%	83,143
Jun-99	80.9%	18.3%	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%	77,691
Sep-99	77.3%	21.7%	0.8%	0.2%	0.1%	74,961
Dec-99	76.5%	22.4%	0.8%	0.2%	0.1%	82,658

Source CH4 Part1

Outpatients Waiting by Specialty

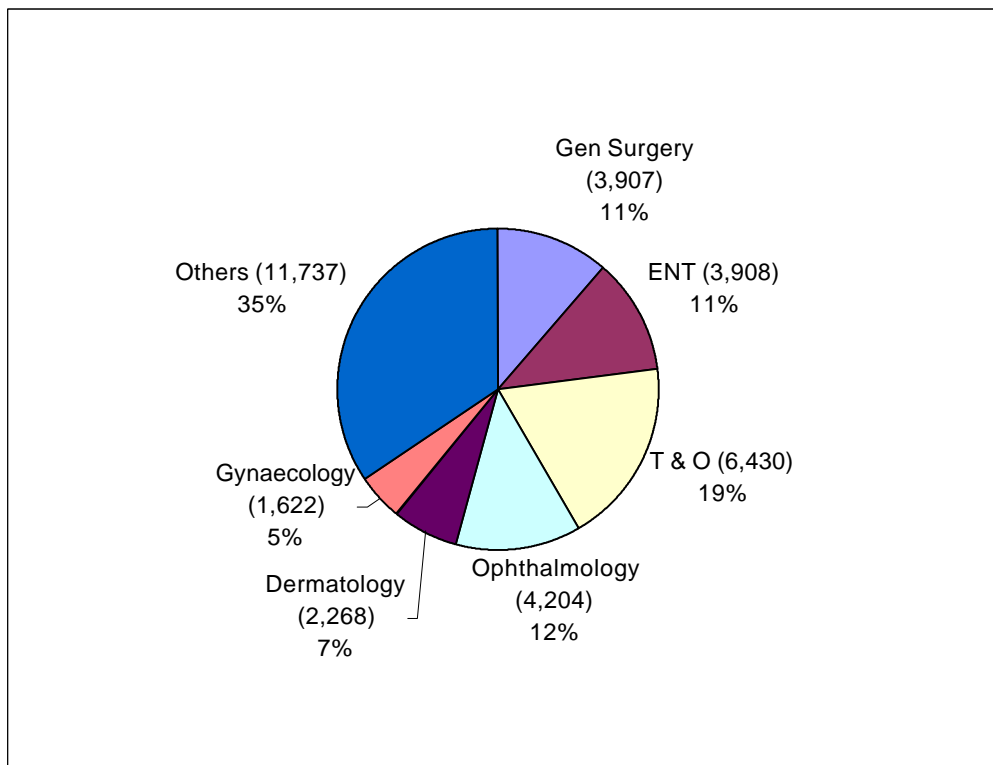
The overwhelming majority of those waiting (67%) were within six specialties; General Surgery, ENT, Trauma & Orthopaedics, Ophthalmology, Dermatology and Gynaecology (Figure 5a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 5b. All figures include only those who are waiting for their first appointment without having cancelled or missed a previous appointment during the December 1999 quarter.

Figure 5a Outpatients – Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of December 1999



Source: CH3 Part1

Figure 5b Outpatients – Excess Waiters¹ by Specialty at the end of December 1999



¹See Notes to Editors (paragraph 6) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Notes to Editors

1. Unless otherwise stated hospitals and patients mentioned in this release refer only to HPSS hospitals and patients.
2. The sources for the data contained in this release are the Charter Monitoring Returns CH1, CH3, CH4 and CHA. The CH1, CH2, CH3 and CH4 returns collect information from Hospital Trusts on a quarterly basis.
3. There is a fundamental difference in coverage between Board based and Trust based information. Board based (CHA) returns exclude all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals.
4. Apart from Table 4, the figures include private patients and those patients who are resident outside Northern Ireland.
5. In Northern Ireland, inpatient excess waiters are defined as those having to wait 12 months or more for admission to the Cardiac Surgery specialty and those having to wait 18 months or more to other specialties.
6. For outpatients, excess waiters are defined as those having to wait more than 3 months for a first outpatient appointment.
7. Ordinary admissions include both (a) patients admitted electively with the expectation that they will remain in hospital for at least one night, and (b) non-elective admissions (e.g. emergency admissions). A patient who is admitted with this intention but who leaves hospital for any reason without staying overnight is still counted as an ordinary admission. Day cases are not included.
8. Day Cases are patients admitted electively during the course of a day with the intention of receiving care who do not require the use of a hospital bed overnight and who return home as scheduled. If this original intention is not fulfilled and the patient stays overnight, such a patient should be counted as an ordinary admission.
9. The inpatient figures presented include people waiting to be admitted as inpatients either as day cases or ordinary admissions. They do not include:
 - Patients admitted as emergency cases;
 - Outpatients;
 - Patients undergoing a planned programme of treatment e.g. a series of admissions for chemotherapy;
 - Maternity;
 - Patients already in hospitals but included on other waiting lists;
 - Patients who are temporarily suspended from waiting lists.
10. Waiting time begins from the date the clinician decided to admit the patient. Patients subsequently offered a date but unable to attend have their waiting times calculated from the most recent date offered. These are known as self-deferred cases and are included in the total waiting.

11. Monthly waiting list figures are only available from September 1998 and exclude private patients and patients resident outside Northern Ireland. The source for the monthly waiting list figures is the monthly return CHA. The monthly figures presented here are produced from an ad-hoc reporting system which does not go through the more stringent validation processes which produce the quarterly figures. For this reason and the fact that the two sets of figures are run-off at different points in time mean that there may be anomalies when comparing the monthly figures with the quarterly figures.
12. The source for outpatient waiting list data is the quarterly Charter Monitoring Return CH3.
13. Figures relating to the quarter ending March 2000 will be released Tuesday, 13th June 2000.
14. Some of the data may be provisional and may be subject to revision in subsequent months/quarters.

Additional Information

Further information on waiting lists in Northern Ireland is available from:

Office Information Manager
Regional Information Branch
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Annexe 2
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3UD

Internet address: <http://www.dhssni.gov.uk/hpss/statistics>