



29 July 2020



Dear 

### **Official Information Act Request**

You have asked for information about breast reconstruction.

- *The number of clients who received immediate breast reconstruction following a mastectomy in 2019/20*

One immediate breast reconstruction following mastectomy was performed at Northland DHB in 2019/20. A number of Northland women were referred to Middlemore Hospital for mastectomy with immediate reconstruction last year.

Please note our comments below regarding access to breast reconstruction. No patients who were suitable for reconstruction did not receive it as a result of the withdrawal of implants last year.

- *The average breast reconstruction wait time for 2019/20*

The patient referred to above waited 19 days. Patients may also have staged fat grafting procedures with a plastic surgeon which may take some time to complete due to the nature of the multi date procedure.

- *The number of women currently on the waitlist for reconstruction following a mastectomy*

There are 6 women waiting for staged fat grafting technique for reconstruction.

- *The number of women who did not meet waitlist criteria*

Northland DHB does not hold this data outside of individual clinical records. In order to extract this information a clinician would need to review each individual clinical file. This would necessarily take them away from their clinical duties including treating and supporting women with breast cancer. I have therefore decided to decline this part of your request in accordance with section 18(f) of the Official Information Act due to the substantial collation and research required. You have a right to complain to the Ombudsman about my decision.

- *An outline of criteria that guides/ governs whether a woman seeking breast reconstruction is accepted or denied treatment.*

A number of clinical and patient factors are used to determine if reconstruction is suitable for each patient. These considerations are discussed and the decision is made with the patient. Clinical factors include tumour biology, stage of disease and likelihood of adjuvant chemotherapy or radiotherapy being required. Patient factors include medical comorbidities, BMI, smoking status, perioperative risk, previous radiotherapy to the breast or chest wall. The type of reconstruction offered depends on patient suitability for particular reconstruction techniques and patient preference. Age is a consideration but not an absolute contraindication to reconstruction. For those women who are not suitable for immediate reconstruction, delayed reconstruction may be offered at a later stage and similar considerations are used to help with decision making.

Due to worldwide concerns about Breast Implant Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIAALCL), the expander implants used for immediate breast reconstruction for breast cancer at Whangarei Hospital were taken off the shelf in 2019 (Allergan). After careful consideration, we found another provider towards the end of 2019 supplying expander implants which has less risk of BIAALCL. As per international guidelines, we stopped doing immediate reconstruction during the COVID-19 lockdown period in 2020 but we are currently offering immediate reconstruction following mastectomy to suitable patients.

Northland DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist public understanding of how we deliver our services. This includes proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been provided to you. Personal or identifying information will be redacted from any response published online. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be publicly available we will consider your views.

If you have any queries relating to Northland DHB's response to your information request please contact me.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Nick Chamberlain**  
**Chief Executive**