

## **R058: Challenges and Possible Solutions for Long Waiting Times for Elective Surgeries in Northern Ireland - QUB**

The proposed research seeks to identify feasible performance management strategies and interventions to reduce unreasonable waiting lists in NI hospitals using a variety of evidence-based methodologies. Demand for elective surgeries is escalating and waiting times have been taken as a key performance indicator of HSC services to encourage performance in hospitals towards high-quality care without unnecessary delay (*Finkenstädt, 2015*). Irrespective of the underlying strategies, waiting times for elective surgeries have increased dramatically over the past few years (*Siciliani and Hurst, 2005*). The ability of hospitals to increase in performance have often been restricted due to resource constraints. As a result, most NHS Trusts in the UK have not achieved their minimum waiting targets in recent years (*Morris et al., 2018*).

Growing waiting times for health care has led to public dissatisfaction with health authorities (*Harrison and Appleby, 2009, Triggle, 2019*). Overwhelming workload with the unprecedented pandemic of COVID-19 is producing an incalculable threat to this problem. Transforming the current situation into a research problem, this health systems research seeks to determine the scale of the opportunity to shorten waiting times for elective surgery, with a particular focus on the situation in NI hospitals. The waiting times for different elective surgeries in NI will be analysed in detail using population-based data of admissions and discharges for the last 10 years. Alongside this quantitative study, the systematic review and the qualitative research will allow to identify the strategies that could be recommended for uptake in NI to ease this burden.

The proposed health systems research seeks to determine the scale of the opportunity to shorten waiting times for elective surgery, with a particular focus on the situation in NI hospitals. The overall Research question for the project is as follows:

What strategies and interventions might reduce long waiting times for elective surgeries in NI hospitals?

### General objective

To describe the waiting times for various elective surgeries and discuss feasible strategies to overcome long waiting times for major elective surgeries for adult patients in NI hospitals. The proposed study will blend together three different types of research. A systematic review followed with quantitative and qualitative studies. The quantitative component includes the detailed analysis of patients waiting time data of HSC which will be obtained from HBS. These HBS data will be used to estimate and predict the waiting periods and patient numbers for different elective surgeries/specialties in different hospitals and trusts. The time-to-event analysis of the waiting list data from the HBS will produce novel and important scientific evidence of the size of the waiting list problem in Northern Ireland.

Specific objective: To describe the waiting times for different types of major elective surgeries in NI hospitals, using routine data.