**Follow-up checks vital for patient safety – Orthopaedic Association**

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The New Zealand Orthopaedic Association (NZOA) says making follow up checks on patients who have had surgery is critical to patient safety and quality care.

The Association is commenting after orthopaedic surgeons at Waikato District Health Board said DHB managers were stopping them from doing follow up checks, so they could assess new patients instead.

“Follow up is a clinical decision and a very important part of the ongoing management of a patient,” says NZOA President Mr Richard Keddell.

“However, it is important to understand that in most instances, clinicians and management work together to find a balance between specialist assessment of new patients and follow up of existing patients.”

He said note needed to be taken of the recent delays in ophthalmology follow ups, which have led to patient harm in some cases.

“Good communication between clinicians and management is particularly important when we are operating in a tight fiscal environment, where there are limited resources.

“The provision of quality care to the patient must come first at all times.”

Mr Keddell says it is unclear whether the orthopaedic follow up issues experienced at Waikato are also evident in other DHBs.

The NZOA advises any patients who are concerned they may not have received adequate follow up or treatment to contact their GP.

ENDS

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