

New Zealand Orthopaedic Association Media release

May 13 2011

ACC hears surgeons' pleas for patients

Orthopaedic surgeons are hoping that things will improve quickly for hundreds of people who have had life-changing orthopaedic surgery delayed or declined by ACC over the last two years.

The President of the New Zealand Orthopaedic Association (NZOA), Associate Professor Gary Hooper, said his 200 members would welcome today's ACC announcement regarding its internal review of elective services. "Our surgeons were increasingly frustrated at having to constantly appeal for patients to have their surgeries covered by ACC, even when they apparently met the criteria and were clearly in urgent need. The process, the decision-making and the communication has been distressing for both patients and surgeons."

Associate Professor Hooper said he applauded ACC for listening to issues raised by the NZOA and other stakeholder groups and for addressing key problems including minimising decision delays, giving consistent decisions and providing better advice to patients and the public. The NZOA had committed to support ACC with many of the issues it has agreed are a problem and it would continue to work with ACC on clinical guidelines to enable ACC to more easily and consistently assess injuries.

"Orthopaedic surgery changes people's lives, especially after an accident" said Associate Professor Hooper. "It returns people to greatly improved function, enabling otherwise healthy people to remain independent in the community and being able to return to productive work."

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Further information from Gary Hooper on 027 432 6263

Released by Sarah Smith on 021 660 951

About the New Zealand Orthopaedic Association

The NZOA is the professional body for orthopaedic surgeons in New Zealand. It has 200 active members. Its key objective is to promote excellence in patient care and to advocate for the needs of patients with orthopaedic conditions.

The NZOA includes seven sub-specialty groups such as spine, hip and knee specialists. It is responsible for training young orthopaedic surgeons and, in association with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the monitoring of continuing education of those in practice. It runs its own annual scientific meetings and combines with Australian surgeons and others from around the world in international efforts to facilitate research and innovation in orthopaedic surgery.

Visit www.nzoa.org.nz for further information.