



MEDIA RELEASE

Push for same day joint replacements needs a re-think

Australian Orthopaedic Association; Australian Ethical Health Alliance

November 2020

Twenty-four-hour or 'same-day' knee and hip replacements being promoted by some Australian private health insurers are unsuitable for many patients, according to a recent panel discussion with leading Australian orthopaedic surgeons.

The short-stay model of care, which reduces the time spent in hospital after knee or hip replacement, allowing patients to recuperate and rehabilitate in their own home, is increasingly being undertaken by Australian orthopaedic surgeons. However, according to panellists, caution needs to be exercised to make sure that patients' best interests come first rather than a drive to save private health funds money, similar to USA-style managed care.

"The model beginning to be adopted in Australia where private patients are having surgery in health fund-owned hospitals that make deals with doctors who work in their hospitals is clouded by vested interests" said Dr Michael Solomon, President of the Australian Society of Arthroplasty.

Panellist Professor Richard de Steiger, deputy director of the Australian Orthopaedic Association National Joint Replacement Registry (AOANJRR) said, "Over the past 12 years the length of stay for both hip and knee replacements has reduced from over seven days to four. It is important that any further reduction in stay does not compromise the quality of joint replacement."

Professor Christopher Vertullo, president of the Australian Knee Society, commented that most cost savings can occur without rushing patients out of hospital too early. "As over 90 per cent of patients do not require expensive inpatient rehabilitation after joint replacement, orthopaedic surgeons must ask their patients to re-think inpatient rehabilitation."

The webinar – 'Short Stay Arthroplasty – the Australian experience' – featured leading Australian orthopaedic surgeons discussing the benefits of short-term day surgery as an appropriate model of care for patients. While it was argued that short-term day surgery could be appropriate for up to 70 per cent of patients, it was important for the sustainability of Australia's health system not to push the remaining 30 per cent of patients, who are typically older and more frail, out of hospital too early. The panellists were unanimous in their support for shorter stays in hospitals, but highlighted it was only one factor in a whole-of-system approach that needed to put the patient first.

Dr David Liu said, "Personalised duty of care that focuses on the patient's individual needs and circumstances is needed. Innovation that focuses on the patient including digital technology through the use of smart apps that guides patients through pre and post rehabilitation goes a long way to providing real benefits for the patient."

"Ensuring that everyone is on the same page when it comes to post-operative care is critical," agreed Dr David Mitchell.

"Staying longer in hospital after arthroplasty is proven to be associated with worse outcomes

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for the patient. Equally, in-patient rehab is wrongly perceived to have better outcomes.”

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About the Australian Orthopaedic Association

The Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) is the peak professional body for orthopaedic surgeons in Australia. AOA provides high quality specialist education, training and continuing professional development. AOA is committed to ensuring the highest possible standard of orthopaedic care and is the leading authority in the provision of orthopaedic information to the community. AOA actively supports scientific research and orthopaedic humanitarian initiatives in Australia and overseas.

About the Australian Ethical Health Alliance

The Australian Ethical Health Alliance aims to improve healthcare in Australia through articulation and affirmation of ethical principles that promote the interests of patients and consumers, enhance access to safe and effective healthcare, encourage ethical collaboration in the healthcare sector and build public trust. It is a sector-lead initiative and participation is voluntary. *The Australian Consensus Framework for Ethical Collaboration in the Healthcare Sector (ACF)* is a consensus of shared values and ethical principles that form the basis of collaboration and interaction among organisations in the Australian healthcare sector.

Find out more at ethicalhealth.org.au

The panel discussion was one of three dedicated to the issues surrounding short stay arthroplasty. The next webinar will be held on Thursday, 26 November:

<https://www.aoa.org.au/events/webinars-public/public>