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MEDIA RELEASE

Patients using Community Diagnostic Centres and surgical hubs could be missing out on latest medical technology

New report reveals opportunities for ICSs to expand pandemic era models of care and calls for comprehensive review of their performance to address the patient backlog

A new report by the Medical Technology Group has called for a full review into the performance of surgical hubs and diagnostic centres to end regional variation in their performance and work through the backlog of 7.5 million patients faster.

As of September 2023, NHS England had 94 operational elective surgical hubs, which have delivered 10,253 elective procedures and 41,067 outpatient appointments.

This is alongside 152 Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) that have successfully delivered 4.2 million tests, checks and scans ranging across 61 individual diagnostic procedures.

Following an investigation into the 42 Integrated Care Systems responsible for managing these centres, the Medical Technology Group argues that better data collection, best practice sharing, clinical oversight and support for medical technologies could improve their performance and avoid regional variation.

In its investigation the MTG found:

- 44% of ICSs that responded indicated they actively review their surgical hubs to ensure efficiency
- 38% indicated that decisions over the creation of local surgical hubs were led by clinical decision making
- Just seven (20%) of ICSs that responded stated that they have attempted to learn from best practice in other ICSs when planning for their surgical hubs

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- Just two ICSs properly consulted their patient populations on the procedures and equipment used within their surgical hubs
- 72% of CDCs involved the public or patients in some capacity in their establishment
- Four ICSs (14%) used organisations such as Healthwatch to provide patient engagement and consultation. Four (14%) did not consult patients at all.

In its report, 'Tackling the Elective Backlog', the Medical Technology Group is calling for a comprehensive review of performance, success, failures, and cost-effectiveness to ensure that the latest medical technology and best practice is being utilised in every CDC and surgical hub across the country.

Chair of the MTG, Barbara Harpham, said:

"Since the pandemic, community diagnostic centres and surgical hubs have emerged as a vital part of our NHS, easing pressure on hospitals and helping to work through the backlog of elective care.

"Their potential to go further by utilising the latest medical technology and innovation should now be a priority. At present a sizable number of ICSs could be doing more to review their performance in line with best practice, using the latest technology, and adopting innovative new practices found in high performance regions of the NHS.

"We must ensure that we have a full and accurate understanding of such a pivotal and increasingly important part of our NHS with regards to performance, progress and innovation. Every patient who uses these services should have access to the best possible medical technology and innovation currently being used on the NHS."

The recommendations from the report include:

1. The Government and NHS England should commit to a comprehensive review into the performance, success, failures and cost-effectiveness of surgical hubs and community diagnostic centres.
2. This review should include an assessment of the effectiveness of medical technologies within surgical hubs and CDCs, with associated recommendations for the improvement and development of their use, and appropriate long term funding to ensure their success.
3. The Government and NHS England should mandate the proper inclusion and involvement of patients in the future establishment of surgical hubs and CDCs to

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ensure they are shaped consistently to meet the needs of the local populations they are serving.

4. The Government and NHS England should ensure that appropriate medical technologies are at the heart of the efforts to tackle the backlog. It is vital that they are utilised within surgical hubs and CDCs to improve outcomes for patients and create efficiencies for the NHS.
5. The Government and NHS England should develop formal platforms and forums for the sharing of best practice between Integrated Care Systems. Instances of best practice are widespread across the NHS, however, can appear isolated and varied nationally. The MTG is calling for the discovery and dissemination of this in all forms, whether it is through the appropriate use of medical technology, the meaningful involvement of patients, or other structural or organisational practices.

The full report 'Tackling the Elective Backlog: A Spotlight Report on the Implementation and Impact of Surgical Hubs and Diagnostic Centres' can be found at <https://mtg.org.uk/campaigns/spotlight-reports/#dejureview2023>

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Notes for editors

About the report

The Medical Technology Groups sent Freedom of Information requests to the 42 ICSs in England and Wales to gather information about the establishment, performance, patient involvement and use of medical technology in relation to surgical hubs and Community Diagnostic Centres. Of these:

- 35 out of 42 responded to the MTG's FOI questions on the establishment of surgical hubs
- 39 out of 42 ICSs responded to questions on the establishment of CDCs
- 21 out of the 42 ICSs responded to questions on how patients were involved in decision making.

Those not represented either did not respond or did not hold data relating to those questions.

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About the Medical Technology Group

The Medical Technology Group (MTG) is a coalition of patient groups, research charities and medical device manufacturers working to make medical technologies available to everyone who needs them. Uptake of medical technology in the UK is not as good as it should be, given its great potential to provide value for money to the NHS, patients and taxpayers. The MTG believes that patients and clinicians need better information about medical technologies so that they can make informed choices about their medical care.

www.mtg.org.uk