



BULLETIN

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HSA members to play critical role in province's new surgical strategy

HSA welcomes the provincial government's [new four-part surgical strategy](#) announced today aimed at reducing wait times for surgery around the province.

The initial phase of the strategy includes funding for an additional 4,000 hip and knee replacements in the coming year – an increase of 34 per cent – with long-term funding to continue increasing the number of surgeries in future years.

Five new hip and knee replacement programs will be established this year – one in each health authority in the province. These programs will not only optimize the use of operating room time and the management of surgical wait lists, but will also include the type of assessment, triage and non-surgical intervention by health science professionals that has been so effective in the Osteoarthritis Service Integration System (OASIS) already used at some sites.

As a result, HSA physiotherapists and occupational therapists will not only provide post-surgical rehabilitation, but will also serve on teams that assess patients when they are first referred, to determine whether they require surgery or would benefit from more conservative management.

Patients who do not require immediate surgery will receive rehabilitation and education provided by physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, and nurses to enable many of them to manage their osteoarthritis and delay, or avoid, the need for surgery. Nearly half of all patients referred to OASIS as surgical candidates by their doctor have been found to be better served by such non-surgical treatment.

“Government’s plan to increase public surgical capacity is welcome news,” said HSA president Val Avery. “Cutting wait times for surgery is an important step in strengthening the public health care system we all rely on.”

“HSA health science professionals will be essential to making the new strategy work.

“Ensuring that the new hip and knee replacement programs include pre-surgical assessment and treatment by health science professionals will not only provide patients with faster and better care, it will also ensure that patients who don’t need surgery are not filling up surgical waitlists. This will allow surgeons to see and treat more patients for whom surgery is the best option, and will provide patients with the best and most appropriate type of care – be it rehabilitation or surgery,” Avery said.