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Wide geographical variation in hospital recovery times

Hospital recovery times differ by three weeks for standard procedures depending on NHS Trust

Research released today reveals that the average patient length of stay (LoS) in hospital following standard surgery can vary by up to 3 weeks depending on the NHS Trust.

Data supplied by NHS trusts on patients' length of stay for bowel and hip surgery shows that the length of a patient's hospital stay varied significantly depending on the hospital in which they were treated. The data were analysed by health data specialists Dr Foster Intelligence and commissioned by Deltex Medical.

Key Findings:

- There was a **21 day** difference between the longest and shortest average LoS following a hip replacement throughout English NHS Trusts
- There was a **16 day** difference between the longest and shortest average LoS following bowel surgery throughout English NHS Trusts
- A patient at the United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust would spend on average fewer than 5 days in hospital following a hip replacement, whereas a patient in the West Middlesex University hospital would spend 26 days for the same operation.
- A patient undergoing bowel surgery in the West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust in Dorchester would spend an average of 11 and a half days in hospital, compared to almost 28 days for a patient treated by the Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust.

Analysing these data in the latest issue of the *Health Service Journal*, published today, Thursday 17 January, Dr Andrew Webb, consultant in critical care and Medical Director at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, writes:

“What is striking about this information is that neither geographical location, the size of the hospital, the type of trust it is nor the number of patients they operate on seems to affect the length of stay. The biggest influence on a patient's recovery time is the way they are treated while they are in hospital.”

Effective reduction of a hospital's average length of stay is not a question of simply discharging patients earlier. Instead, it is ensuring that patients recover more quickly and reach the point at which they are ready to leave hospital sooner.

There are also wide variations even within local areas. For example, a bowel surgery patient in the Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust in Redhill will spend, on average, 20 days in hospital, which is more than a week longer than a patient in the Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Trust 20 miles away in Guildford.

More regional differences, and a list with the shortest and the longest lengths of stay can be found at the end of this release, and a full list is available at www.reducinglengthofstay.org.uk.

Reducing LoS is good for patients, it is good for clinicians, and it is good for the NHS, as Andrew Webb explains:

“Patients would rather recuperate in more familiar and comfortable surroundings than a hospital ward and their families would also prefer to see their relatives leave hospital sooner if they are well enough to be discharged. Clinicians prefer shorter hospital stays – not least because it means we can treat more people within the same beds available to us.” Dr Webb’s team has over the last few months been able to reduce colorectal patients’ average length of stay to just 6 days, compared to 9-10 days previously.

In addition to profoundly affecting the experience of patients, LoS also has significant cost implications for NHS Trusts. The approximate cost for a 24-hour stay on an NHS general or surgical ward is £400, rising to £1,500 per day if surgical complications require the expertise of the intensive care unit.

Assuming no complications arose, the average cost of a hip replacement in West Middlesex is **£8,400** more than in Bristol based on length of stay. Accommodating the average patient’s post-bowel surgery hospital stay would cost Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust **£6,500** more than the West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust.

A number of hospital trusts around the country have introduced a new standard of care aimed at reducing complications, improving patients’ recovery times and shortening lengths of stay. Called ERP (Enhanced Recovery Program), it combines a number of measures both before, during and after surgery to ensure that patients recover are fit for discharge earlier – reducing costs and improving patient care.

Patient Case Study: Lord Peston

Lord Maurice Peston, 76, underwent major bowel surgery at Guy’s and St Thomas’ hospital earlier this year. As part of the hospital’s new Enhanced Recovery Programme, he experienced the very latest in surgical technology and patient care.

He and his wife were given a dedicated nurse, Marie Ellwood (ERP Specialist Nurse), who explained every aspect of his surgery, so that they knew exactly what to expect, an initiative Lord Peston describes as “absolutely marvellous”.

He continues: “I felt completely reassured and cared for, and prepared for every eventuality. I had had a similar operation a few months earlier, without ERP, but this time I was out earlier, and the medical support both before and after the surgery was outstanding.”

Andy Williams, Consultant General and Colorectal Surgeon who operated on Lord Peston, remarks: “We introduced ERP in order to provide our patients with the best possible standards of care. We have reviewed every element of our system, fully assessing patients before surgery and changing our practice during and after the operation in line with modern innovation and research. Other elements of enhanced recovery – eliminating bowel preparation, carb-loading patients to reduce the stress of surgery and moving to early mobilisation – had been happening successfully in a number of places but we put these together with innovative technologies like key-hole surgery and specialist fluid monitoring during the operation, which has made a real difference to patients.”

Dr Williams’ team has managed to reduce their average length of stay to just 10.7 days, compared to 19.54 days for the trust as a whole.

Notes to Editors:

1. The data for bowel surgery are taken from information provided by English NHS Trusts for 2006-2007 and the data for hip replacements are taken from information provided by English NHS Trusts for 2005-2006.
2. The NHS trusts with the longest and shortest lengths of stay for **bowel surgery** in **England** (2006/7) are:

Table 1:

10 NHS Trusts with shortest length of stay for bowel surgery
England average

Trust	Location	Average LOS (days)	Days below national average
West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust	Dorchester	11.59	-4.31
The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	Harlow	11.74	-4.16
Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Doncaster, South Yorkshire	11.74	-4.16
Winchester and Eastleigh Healthcare NHS Trust	Hampshire	11.74	-4.15
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	Nottingham	12.01	-3.89
Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS Trust	Essex	12.06	-3.83
Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Trust	Guildford	12.17	-3.72
South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Torbay	12.35	-3.55
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Cambridge	12.51	-3.38
West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust	Bury St Edmunds	12.70	-3.20

10 NHS Trusts with longest length of stay for bowel surgery

Trust	Location	Average LOS (days)	Days above national average
Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust	Merseyside, Lancashire	27.94	12.05
Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust	West London	22.47	6.58
Stockport NHS Foundation Trust	Manchester	22.31	6.41
Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust	North London	22.07	6.17
Whipps Cross University Hospital NHS Trust	East London	21.43	5.53
Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	Manchester, Lancashire	20.80	4.90
The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust	North West London	20.71	4.81
Barts and The London NHS Trust	City of London, East London	20.46	4.56
Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust	East Surrey, West and North West Sussex	20.05	4.15
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	Sunderland	19.96	4.06

England average

15.90

3. The NHS trusts with the longest and shortest lengths of stay for **hip replacement** in **England** (2005/6) are:

Table 2:			
10 NHS Trusts with shortest length of stay for hip replacement			
England average		10.39	
Trust	Location	Average LOS (days)	Days below national average
United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	Bristol	4.43	-5.96
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust	Barnstaple	6.50	-3.89
Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust	South East	6.76	-3.63
Poole Hospitals NHS Trust	Poole	7.01	-3.39
Queen Mary's Sidcup NHS Trust	South East London	7.07	-3.32
North Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust	Basingstoke	7.20	-3.19
Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	East London	7.24	-3.15
Weston Area Health NHS Trust	Weston-super-Mare	7.34	-3.05
Northern Lincolnshire and Goole Hospitals NHS Trust	Grimsby, Goole and Scunthorpe	7.49	-2.90
James Paget Healthcare NHS Trust	Norfolk and Suffolk	7.74	-2.65
10 NHS Trusts with longest length of stay for hip replacement			
Trust	Location	Average LOS (days)	Days above national average
Tameside and Glossop Acute Services NHS Trust	Manchester	15.29	4.90
Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospitals NHS Trust	East London	15.45	5.06
Winchester and Eastleigh Healthcare NHS Trust	Winchester	16.31	5.92
St George's Healthcare NHS Trust	South London	16.69	6.30
Newham University Hospital NHS Trust	East London	17.13	6.74
Kingston Hospital NHS Trust	South London	17.20	6.80
St Mary's NHS Trust	West London	17.66	7.26
St Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust	Merseyside	17.99	7.60
Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust	South London	18.71	8.32
West Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust	South West London	26.00	15.61
England average		10.39	

4. The Trusts with the longest and shortest lengths of stay by region:

Trust	Average LOS (days)	Days below national average
<i>East of England - Hip replacement</i>		
James Paget Healthcare NHS Trust	7.74	-2.65
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	11.02	0.63
England average	10.39	
<i>East of England - Bowel surgery</i>		
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	12.51	-3.38
Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	16.32	0.42
England average	15.90	
<i>London - Hip replacement</i>		
Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	7.24	-3.15
West Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust	26.00	15.61
<i>London - Bowel surgery</i>		
Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust	13.41	-2.49
Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust	22.47	6.58
<i>Midlands - Hip replacement</i>		
Northern Lincolnshire and Goole Hospitals NHS Trust	7.49	-2.90
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	13.50	3.11
<i>Midlands - Bowel surgery</i>		
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	12.01	-3.89
University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust	18.89	3.00
<i>North-East - Hip replacement</i>		
South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust	9.13	-1.26
South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust	14.71	4.32
<i>North-East - Bowel surgery</i>		
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust	13.39	-2.51
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	19.96	4.06
<i>North-West - Hip replacement</i>		
The Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust	8.07	-2.32
St Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust	17.99	7.60
<i>North-West - Bowel surgery</i>		
North Cumbria Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	12.97	-2.92
Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust	27.94	12.05
<i>South-East - Hip replacement</i>		
Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust	6.76	-3.63
Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust	18.71	8.32
<i>South-East - Bowel surgery</i>		
The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	11.74	-4.16
Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust	20.05	4.15
<i>South-West - Hip replacement</i>		
United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	4.43	-5.96
Salisbury Health Care NHS Trust	11.81	1.42
<i>South-West - Bowel surgery</i>		
West Dorset General Hospitals NHS Trust	11.59	-4.31
United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust	17.31	1.41
<i>Yorkshire - Hip replacement</i>		
Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	7.86	-2.53
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	12.23	1.84
<i>Yorkshire - Bowel surgery</i>		
Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	11.74	-4.16
	19.94	4.04

5 The complete NHS Trust data can be found at:
www.reducinglengthofstay.org.uk

6. Key components of Enhanced Recovery Programme (ERP) are:

- a. **Before the operation:** A comprehensive preparation of the patient prior to admission including a package of education to better inform them about their 'surgical journey' and an objective assessment of their fitness to undergo the required operation
- b. **During the operation:** The use of minimally invasive surgical techniques (keyhole surgery) and precise anaesthetic care with specialist cardiac and fluid monitoring during the operation. This specialist monitoring utilises a technique called oesophageal doppler monitoring (ODM) a technique that is accepted as being 'best practice' by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) but is currently used in less than 5% of major operations
- c. **After the operation:** A defined postoperative programme including rapid mobilisation and early return to eating and drinking that minimises surgical complications while encouraging patient recovery and discharge

7. The analysis on hospital length stay was funded by Deltex Medical, as is Reducing Length of Stay website.

8. Deltex Medical Ltd, a small British medical device company, has developed the CardioQ monitor to allow anaesthetists to monitor and optimise circulating blood volume. This is known as Oesophageal Doppler monitoring - a minimally invasive method of accurately measuring beat-by-beat circulating blood volume in patients undergoing surgery. It allows doctors to use fluids and drugs to optimise the flow of blood around the system, thus maintaining an adequate supply of oxygen to the body's organs and tissues.

9. Reduced circulating blood volume is known as hypovolemia, similar to dehydration, which leads to insufficient oxygen being delivered to the organs. Insufficient oxygen causes medical complications including major organ failure which leads to longer hospital stays and in some cases death.

10. This data was analysed by Dr Foster Intelligence. More details can be found on their website: www.drfooster.co.uk

11. For more information, please contact Emma McKinney or Emily Lacey on emckinney@hanovercomms.com / elacey@hanovercomms.com or 020 7400 4480