



Weekend Waiting List Initiative 2022

The CHT Weekend Waiting List Initiative has been running as an annual project at Red Cross War Memorial Hospital (RCWMCH) since 2011. The Initiative was established to reduce waiting lists for elective paediatric surgeries by adding an additional day of surgeries (Saturday) to the Hospital's operating schedule. Currently, children requiring minor elective surgery at RCWMCH (post-COVID) can wait anything from 6 months to 2 years for their surgery. Although these are procedures that can be safely scheduled in advance, that's not to say they aren't important: Health outcomes from untreated surgical disease can worsen over time and render even delayed surgical intervention ineffective. These delays also cause psychological and financial hardships for patients and families as their daily life is disrupted.

Operating on the weekend means that this initiative doesn't impact on bed numbers and provides an efficient throughput point for the backlog in day surgical cases. And by reducing the large volumes of relatively minor cases, more scope and flexibility is provided for more complex cases to be attended to during the week.

The twelfth annual Weekend Waiting List Initiative at the RCWMCH successfully completed 33 additional theatre lists, benefiting 223 children who were on the Hospital's waiting lists for surgery.

Saturday Surgeries answer a mother's prayer for her little boy

"All I want is to see my son grow. For him to become a good man, a father, and a respected member of society. I want him to do good."

These are, Hanover Park mother, Kim's wishes for her 4-year-old son, Hayden.

Nine months ago, a visit to the local day hospital turned Kim's entire life around. Hayden was diagnosed with having undescended testes. Commonly identified in infancy, this congenital condition caused his testes to develop higher up in Hayden's body. Hayden needed to have an orchiopexy done - an operation to relocate his testes to the scrotum.

Whilst this is a relatively minor procedure, in the long term, without the surgery, Hayden would have struggled with infertility and would have had increased chances of cancer than the average male. Minor surgeries like these are often bumped down the list when more urgent and complex cases are prioritised. This creates a backlog, and children like Hayden can wait up to a year to receive their surgeries.

Burdened with the knowledge that her baby boy needed surgery, and frustrated that he might not get it immediately, Kim felt desperate. Her wish for her son soon became a perpetual prayer.

"I prayed for Hayden to get called for his operation so that he can have the future I have always wished for him," she recounts. Hayden is going to start school next year. Kim feared that without the surgery done timeously, her little boy would be subjected to mockery by other children at school, and that it would affect his confidence and jeopardise his experience of childhood.

Limited staffing capacity and theatre availability during the weeks makes it incredibly challenging to prioritise non-urgent, minor surgeries. Yet, Red Cross performs the majority of paediatric surgeries in the Western Cape, with **over 5000 operations performed annually**. That's a lot of prayers that needed answering.

It's good to know that while we pray, someone is making a plan! In the first week of November this year, Hayden was able to have this life-changing surgery. This little miracle is called the **Weekend Waiting List** project. The project enables the Hospital to add an additional day of surgeries (Saturday) to the operating schedule to assist in reducing the backlog of minor cases like Hayden's.

Supernumerary paediatric surgeon Dr Josephine Middleton said: **"It's tough to sit in clinics and tell parents that their child needs an operation, but they will have to wait up to a year. We are currently booking for June 2023 and it's difficult to see the patients' parents' faces drop because they know their child needs an operation, but he/she won't have it soon. So, the opportunity of cutting down that waiting time is such a privilege and worth working on Saturdays,"** she smiles.



The sacrifice that Dr Josephine and other paediatric surgeons make in committing to the Saturday surgeries over and above their weekly duties, is both a pleasure and a privilege for them.

"What's great about the Saturday surgeries is that we get to do these important operations which don't get prioritised because they are not 'life and death' situations"

To date, over **1400** patients have been assisted through the Weekend Waiting List Project at RCWMCH. And that's a lot of prayers answered.

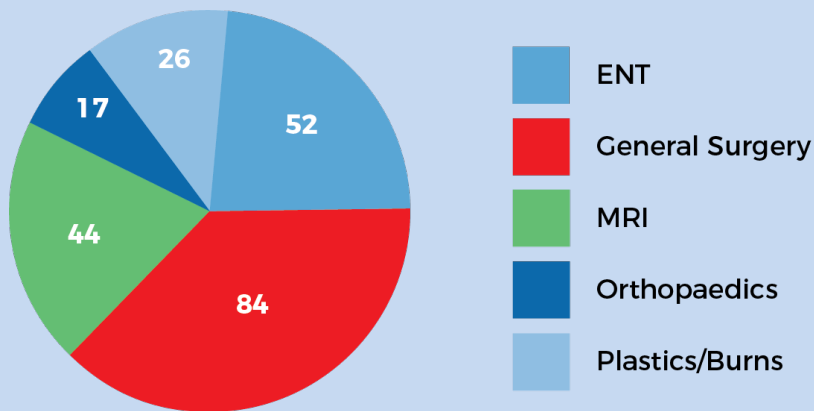
Hayden has now fully recovered from his surgery and is back at home with his family. He is back to playing with his friends, and looks forward to starting his first year at school next year. Miracles always come with a good dose of gratitude, so, thank you!

Surgical conditions account for 6-12% of all paediatric hospital visits, and it is estimated that 85% of children will require surgical treatment by the age of 15 years. Day case surgery has increased in recent years - as anaesthetics have become safer and procedures simplified, with more procedures being added to the day case option as opposed to inpatient- thus increasing the need for lists at all health facilities.

Now in it's twelfth year, The Weekend Waiting List initiative has proved to be an effective intervention to reduce the backlog for paediatric day surgeries. Operating on the weekend means that this initiative doesn't impact on bed numbers and provides an efficient throughput point for the backlog in day surgical cases. And by reducing the large volumes of relatively minor cases, more scope and flexibility is provided for more complex cases to be attended to during the week.



Since the 2022 Weekend Waiting List initiative officially kicked off in April, **33** additional lists were completed, treating **223** children who were on the Hospital's waiting lists for elective surgeries.



Far Reaching Benefits of the WWLI

- Sick children awaiting much-needed life changing operations can undergo these procedures sooner. Delays while waiting for surgery not only decreases their quality of life but can also cause severe damage causing them to become critical cases.
 - Waiting lists will be successfully and efficiently shortened and the Hospital's capacity increased.
 - This supports the ethos of the surgeons to provide the best possible medical and nursing care with the shortest hospitalisation possible
 - Shorter waiting lists mean fewer no-shows and thus fewer re-bookings. Long delays such as this led to many patients missing their dates resulting in both wasted theatre availability as well as the need for re-booking, hence a cycle of prolonging the wait again
 - Once a big volume of these life-changing cases are taken off the waiting list, there will be scope for more flexibility for theatre procedures during the week
- Our heartfelt and sincere appreciation extends to each and every one of our loyal donors for contributing to this special Weekend Waiting List Project.*

THANK YOU!



Financial Report

The WWLI is run in collaboration with the Department of Health and Hospital Management and Surgical teams. Funding from the Children's Hospital Trust goes directly towards the required support of key staffing elements that enable a further surgical case to be done within the hospital system. The Department of Health provides for perfusion, surgeons, supporting staff, consumables, incidental expenses and infrastructure costs within the span of the day-to-day running of the facility.

Total Budget 2022	Total Expenditure Jan-Dec 2022
R1 262 032.00	R1 245 947.14

CHT is expanding the WWL Initiative in 2023

In 2023, we are excited to expand the project to include Paediatric Surgery at Tygerberg Hospital, which also provides a tertiary level surgical treatment to children in the Northern Metro sub-districts, Khayelitsha, Eastern Tygerberg, West Coast, Cape Winelands and the Overberg rural districts. (approx. population of 3.4 million people). The Paediatric Surgery is a clinical unit in Tygerberg Hospital associated academically with Stellenbosch University, and performs about 2000 procedure per year with increasing numbers recently. Similar to RCWMCH, children requiring elective surgery at Tygerberg can also wait up to 2 years.

