



Weekend Waiting List Initiative

Progress Report July 2023



The CHT Weekend Waiting List Initiative, established in 2011, aims to help reduce waiting lists for elective paediatric surgeries by adding an additional day of surgeries (Saturday) to a Hospital's operating schedule.

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. However, South Africa's public health sector is plagued by long waiting times for surgery, a situation that was made much worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Currently, children living in the Western Cape can wait for anywhere between 9 months and 2 years to receive surgical treatment, with many having to endure multiple cancellations and re-bookings.**

The impact of delays in elective surgical care in children can have significant consequences on their health and well-being. Elective surgeries, although not immediately life-threatening, are often performed to improve a child's quality of life or address underlying medical conditions. Prolonged delays can lead to increased pain, discomfort, and potential complications for the child. It may also result in limitations in daily activities, such as reduced mobility or impaired development. Furthermore, delays can impact the emotional and psychological well-being of both the child and their family, causing stress, anxiety, and frustration.

Adrian's Story

It's a chilly Saturday morning, just before the sun rises, and Chelanda stands outside Tygerberg Hospital with her three-year-old son, Adrian, clutching his hand tightly. Today is the day they have been anxiously waiting for: Adrian's first surgery. When Adrian was born, doctors discovered he had undescended testicles, a condition that could have serious consequences if left untreated. Chelanda's heart aches with worry as she knows that if undiagnosed, this seemingly common condition can lead to testicular cancer, torsion, and even infertility in the future.

But their journey has not been an easy one. Their appointment for surgery was first scheduled in late 2020, only to be rescheduled not once, but twice, over the past two years. The waiting list at Tygerberg Hospital keeps growing. Dr. Corné De Vos, a dedicated Paediatric Surgeon, reveals that for every five surgeries performed, ten more children are added to the list. Cancellations during Covid have made the situation much worse, emphasizing the importance of addressing the backlog.

Chelanda has endured the mental and emotional strain of preparing for Adrian's surgery time and time again. Each postponed surgery meant more check-ups, more uncertainty, and more emotional and financial strain for Chelanda. They must arrive at the hospital by 6am, Adrian hungry and crying, forbidden to eat anything since midnight. Chelanda has had to sacrifice precious days off work, spending R100 each trip just for transportation. The toll of living in uncertainty and fear has left her exhausted, with little hope left that her child will ever receive the surgery he desperately needs.

Finally, a glimmer of hope shines through the darkness. Thanks to the launch of the Weekend Waiting List Initiative (WWLI) at Tygerberg, their long-awaited turn has come. The WWLI allows for surgeries to be performed on weekends, reducing the chances of postponement due to complex or urgent cases. It's a lifeline for the backlog of day surgical cases, ensuring that patients like Adrian receive the care they deserve without burdening the hospital's bed capacity.

Dr. Vos, a caring and compassionate mother herself, understands the pain of postponed surgeries all too well. She knows that this initiative will make an immense difference in the lives of both patients and the dedicated healthcare workers who strive to help them. The spirit of unity and empathy drives the entire team, as they are committed to providing a brighter future for every child in need.

Chelanda's heart brims with gratitude. Finally, the wait is over, and Adrian can embark on his journey to a healthier future. With every beat of her grateful heart, she implores the community to support the WWLI at Tygerberg, so that more children, like her precious Adrian, can receive the timely surgeries they need. Together, let us bring light to the lives of these brave little warriors, ensuring that their dreams can flourish and their smiles can radiate with newfound hope.



Every little one counts



Thandolwakhe's Story

Being sick is never nice for the child or the parent, but having a child who is constantly sick, is another story.

Nozi is sitting at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital surgical ward with her nine-year-old daughter, Thandolwakhe, and all she feels today is huge relief. Her daughter is about to have surgery and that itself has a measure of anxiety, but to Nozi, this day couldn't have come soon enough.

Nozi recalls their journey. "Thandolwakhe has always been a sickly child. She suffers from asthma as well as chronic tonsillitis, and we started becoming more concerned last year when we realised that it was getting harder for us to go to work as Thandolwakhe was absent from school more frequently. We spent many nights at the hospital with her as the severe bouts of tonsillitis caused her body temperature to go very high."

After four long years of doctor and day hospital visits, it became clear that Thandolwakhe needed to have her tonsils removed as the condition was exacerbated by her asthma. "This has been a very difficult journey for us. We were in and out of the clinic. Thando would go to school and if she got the slightest cold or fever, the tonsillitis would be triggered."

Because of a long waiting list and postponements, Thando's surgery was moved from February 2022 to June to June 2022 at the Mitchell's Plain District Hospital. It was postponed yet again and, they finally received another date for June 2023, an entire year later, at Red Cross Children's Hospital on the Weekend Waiting List.

While Nozi is elated that her child's suffering will soon be over, it is evident that the emotional, physical and financial toll has not been easy on the family.

"I'm very happy she is having this surgery today. It will also be a financial relief for us because when she got sick, we would often go to the doctor which cost us R480 per consultation. At times, we would take her to the local day hospital in the early hours of the morning or late at night, and that would mean a day out of work. Or we would go to the nearest pharmacy and buy over-the-counter medication, which was also very costly. Travelling costs from Gugulethu to the hospital via public transport would cost us R88 for a return trip. We are half-way through the year and my leave days have depleted so I must take unpaid leave which leaves me with a reduced salary."

Despite this, Nozi would do it all again, in a heartbeat, as she gazes at her beautiful daughter who smiles bravely and gives her a thumbs-up..



The mom is grateful and excited at the thought of her child being happy and healthy again. "It has been a challenging journey for us all, but we are glad that we are finally here, and we are thankful to the donors for making it possible for us to help heal our children. Without them, we would not be here today."



Every little one counts



RCWMCH

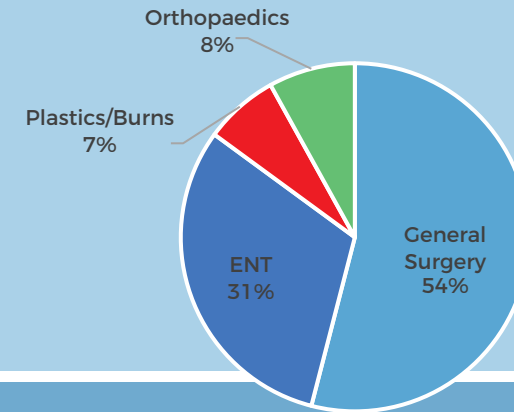
The **13th WWLI at RCWMCH** began in March this year, initially starting with only 2 additional lists per month due to reduced theatre staff availability. Staffing challenges have since been resolved, and the project is now running every weekend. Between March and June, **RCWMCH** has completed an additional **13 lists, benefiting 82 patients.**

Current challenges/service pressures experienced by the surgical services at RCWMCH are still mainly due to COVID-19 pandemic, the unprecedented paediatric surge season post the pandemic, and most recently loadshedding, leading to a significant backlog of elective surgical procedures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, elective surgical lists were cut to reduce the risk of exposure and disease, of both patients and hospital staff, to the COVID-19 virus. Following this, was the aftermath of the pandemic which saw the unprecedented surge of severe medical conditions requiring more urgent attention which largely dominated the hospital platform during most of 2022. Loadshedding has also added to the pressure on surgical services as elective procedures are not always able to go ahead as planned.



RCWMCH	Theatre Lists	Patients
Planned	33	165
Progress (March -June)	13	82

Surgery Disciplines Participating



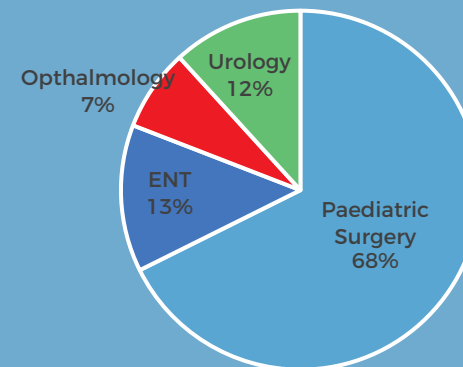
Tygerberg Hospital

In addition, this year we expanded the WWLI to include **Paediatric Surgery at Tygerberg Hospital**, like RCWMCH. Tygerberg is a tertiary hospital that provides a full range of general specialist and sub-specialist surgical services for **both adults and children living** in the Northern and Eastern areas of the Western Cape. **The Paediatric Surgery unit at Tygerberg hospital performs around 2000 operations per year** with increasing numbers recently. Tygerberg Hospital, who are doing bi- monthly Saturday surgeries, having completed **10 additional lists, benefiting 52 patients.** And from June, they will be adding a 3rd list/month to assist Khayelitsha Hospital with their Paediatric Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) surgical backlog: Khayelitsha only has capacity for 1 paediatric ENT slate/month, and are experiencing long waiting list for tonsillectomy, grommets etc.- as these cases frequently bumped off because of the deluge of emergency cases.

The procedures will be done at Tygerberg as Khayelitsha find it difficult to recruit theatre staff during weekends (mostly because of safety concerns.)

Tygerberg	Theatre Lists	Patients
Planned	20	100
Progress (Feb -June)	10	52

Surgery Disciplines Participating





THANK YOU
for your support!

Financial Report:

	Total Budget 2023	Total Expenditure Feb 2022 - June 2023
Red Cross War Memorial Hospital	R1 345 392	R462 807
Tygerberg Hospital	R866 804	R251 477
Total	R1 636 970	R714 284

