



The National Treatment Purchase Fund

ANNUAL REPORT

2004

Lo-Call 1890 720 820

Website: www.ntpf.ie

WAITING
for an OPERATION?



The National Treatment Purchase Fund

Annual Report 2004

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The mission of the National Treatment Purchase Fund is to reduce the length of time public patients are on hospital waiting lists by offering them a choice in obtaining access to treatment, quickly, safely and to a high standard of patient satisfaction, in line with the Government's Health Strategy

MISSION STATEMENT

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) will fulfill this mission by:

- Putting patient's needs first.
- Assuring quality of patient care.
- Measuring results and performance.
- Operating a reliable Patient Treatment Register as a basis for quantifying waiting times.
- Maintaining co-operative relationships with hospitals, consultants and patients.
- Operating efficiently.
- Obtaining value for money.

Examples of operations/surgery arranged under the NTPF include:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| • Cataract | • Tonsils |
| • Varicose veins | • Plastic surgery |
| • Hernia | • Cardiac surgery |
| • Gall bladder | • Hip and knee replacement |
| • Prostate | • Neurosurgery |

Treatments are carried out mainly in private hospitals in Ireland as well as Northern Ireland, the UK and the US.

To end 2004, 23,379 patients have been treated.

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

2004 has been a busy and successful year for the National Treatment Purchase Fund ("NTPF"). The NTPF is one of the initiatives outlined in the Health Strategy and Programme for Government and was set up in April 2002. The Fund's role is to reduce the time public patients wait for operations on public hospital waiting lists. The Fund arranges treatment for public patients who have been longest waiting. Treatment is arranged in hospitals in Ireland, Northern Ireland and England.

This report follows on from our anniversary report and sets out details of the Fund's work in 2004 and its plans for handling its new responsibilities in respect of managing and collating national waiting lists.

Performance

The key performance indicator is to reduce the length of time patients wait for their operations in line with the Health Strategy target of a three month maximum waiting time. Patients should not have to wait an unacceptable length of time for their treatment. I am pleased to report that, in conjunction with hospitals, consultants and GPs that the NTPF is well on its way to meeting this goal.

Essentially this means that all people called "long waiters", many of whom had literally waited years for treatment have now been treated. This is significant progress considering one of the first patients of the Fund had been waiting over eight years for his operation. Also, there have been significant reductions in the number of patients waiting for hospital treatment. There is now no need for any public patient to wait longer than three months for a wide range of surgical procedures.

In 2004, in cooperation with hospitals, consultants and GPs, we arranged treatment for 13,627 patients, well above the target of 12,000, bringing the total number of patients treated by the Fund since inception to 23,379.

On average 1135 patients were referred by hospitals and doctors each month. However, referrals of patients overseas for hospital treatment continued to be slow amounting to 1522, of these 974 to Northern Ireland and 548 to England. While we realise this is a new departure, it is an avenue worthy of pursuit as we have sourced additional capacity there. Therefore we will continue to urge hospitals and patients to avail of treatment options in the UK. Notwithstanding significant progress in the vast majority of hospitals, it is regrettable that a small number of hospitals still have long waiting times for patients on their waiting lists.

Funding

The Fund continues to make efficient and effective use of available resources to purchase treatment at competitive prices on behalf of patients. Our total funding of €44 million in 2004 represented 0.4% of the total health spend budget for that year. The percentage spent on patient care was 94.27%: 5.73% was spent on administration and providing information to the public about their entitlement to treatment under the Fund.

Cooperation

The goodwill and cooperation of doctors, health boards and hospitals throughout the country is crucial to the Fund's work in delivering treatment to patients. We appreciate the effort made by all concerned to ensure patients entitled to treatment under the Fund were treated during the year. We all need to work together for the benefit of patients; the Fund will continue to play a supportive role to assist hospitals in ensuring patients receive treatment within an acceptable timeframe.



New structure

On 1 May 2004, the Fund was established as an independent statutory agency and a new Board of Directors was appointed. I am pleased to formally welcome the new members of the Board who are already established as a cohesive working group dedicated to patients' interests.

Patient Treatment Register

In May 2004 the NTPF was given responsibility for recording and publishing national waiting list figures. The NTPF carried out a detailed review of the existing system. It found that the old system was based on a collection of "statistics" by speciality and did not hold individual patient names or details. As a result, the NTPF concluded that it could not readily identify or verify, from the information provided, patients actively waiting for treatment, patients temporarily not available for treatment and patients no longer needing treatment.

Consequently, the NTPF decided to move away from the old system and to create a new Patient Treatment Register of named patients. A review of international practice was carried out and models from other countries studied. The Register is scheduled to be introduced on a phased basis by July 2005 with publication of waiting lists for the main Dublin teaching hospitals and St. John's Hospital, Limerick. It is expected to be fully in place for all hospitals in 2006. It will be constantly updated by the Fund to ensure it is accurate. Maintenance of the Register represents a new challenge for the NTPF but it will make the whole process more accountable, authoritative and transparent. It will benefit all patients by providing accurate, validated information about the number and length of time patients are waiting for treatment once it is up and running. A detailed description of the Register is on page 10 of this report.

The future

We are pleased that patients are taking the initiative and seeking faster treatment by contacting the Fund directly and we expect this to grow once the Patient Treatment Register is introduced. In addition to the introduction of the Register, the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children has also requested that the Fund carry out a pilot project to treat patients waiting a long time for hospital outpatient consultations. This is an expansion of the Fund's role and will be set up in 2005.

I would like to thank Ms Mary Harney, Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children and her predecessor Mr Micheál Martin for their support of the Fund's work. We have benefited from their strong commitment to our task. I also wish to thank the officials in the Department of Health and Children and the chief executives and liaison officers in the public and private hospitals around the country for all their assistance. The Fund could not achieve its aim without their cooperation and support in facilitating patient treatment.

Finally, the management and staff of the NTPF have made enormous progress in the short period of the Fund's life. Their compassionate dedication to patient care is the real story behind the figures in this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maureen P. Lynott'.

Maureen P. Lynott
Chairperson

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The NTPF has quickly established itself within the Irish health system, delivering on its focussed mandate. We exceeded our targets for treating patients in 2003 and 2004 and waiting times are substantially down to optimum levels across a whole range of specialties.

Fund performance

The NTPF was set up initially to deal with those patients waiting longest for operations. At the start, the Fund concentrated on adults who were waiting a year or more for surgical treatment and children who were waiting six months or more for an operation. Today, this target has been met and there is now no need for patients to wait longer than three months for a wide range of surgical procedures such as cataract operations, hernia operations, gall bladder operations and cardiac surgery.

While much attention has been given to the total number of people waiting for operations, the key performance indicator is the length of time a person waits for treatment. At the end of 2004, we are pleased to report that waiting times have fallen significantly as follows:

- 11 hospitals (37%) are referring patients waiting three to six months.
- 15 hospitals (50%) are referring patients waiting between six and 12 months.
- Four hospitals (13%) are referring patients waiting between 12 and 24 months.

Therefore, 87% of hospitals are now referring patients waiting less than 12 months. This represents a major reduction in the length of time patients have to wait. Referral rates have also risen constantly on a monthly basis throughout the year.

The vast majority of patients have been treated in private hospitals in Ireland; 7% were patients treated in the UK and the US. Treatments covered a wide range of surgical procedures, including ENT, vascular and general surgery (such as gall bladder, tonsils and hernia). A full breakdown of these procedures is set out on page 8. At the start of the year, the 10,000th patient was treated, a significant milestone in the history of the Fund.

Patient satisfaction

One of the main principles underlying the NTPF is that the services purchased for patients must be of a high quality and acceptable to patients. The NTPF routinely surveys patients who have been treated under the initiative to obtain their feedback and comments. In recent patient satisfaction surveys, 98.5% of patients have expressed satisfaction with the NTPF's service. This is a very positive result. Patients have expressed satisfaction with every aspect of the process, from their first contact through to post-discharge care. The NTPF aims to continue its structured programme of quality assurance in all its operations, including, in particular, patient care and safety, accountability and patient information.

Lo-Call number

Patients can contact the Fund directly on Lo-Call 1890 720 820. The Lo-Call number has been particularly successful and the number of calls made by patients and their families is on the increase. By the end of 2004, there were 12,847 calls to the NTPF Lo-Call line of which 2,942 were eligible for treatment under the Fund.



Patient mobility

Mobility is now a key part of the success of the NTPF. It makes no sense for people to remain on waiting lists when facilities are available for them to be treated. The NTPF arranges for treatment to take place primarily in private hospitals throughout Ireland and it identifies and utilises capacity where it is available. Treatment is also available in private hospitals in the UK. Patients willing to travel outside their local area for treatment can receive faster treatment. We expect to see increased mobility within the system, thus making efficient use of available resources nationally and giving patients choice and speedier access to treatment.

Information campaigns

We continued to actively promote the Fund to patients throughout 2004. Patients and GP information campaigns contributed to the increase in referrals to the Fund. The programme has included promotion of the Fund in GPs' surgeries, clinics, public information offices, post offices and public libraries. Information evenings have been held in venues throughout the country and patient information booklets have been published and distributed. In addition, national and local advertising campaigns have been undertaken to ensure people waiting for operations know their entitlements and how to avail of them. Our website www.ntpf.ie contains all the information potential patients need to know and has useful information for health professionals.

The delivery of speedier treatment to patients is the objective of all those involved in patient care. I would like to record my appreciation most of all to the staff of the NTPF for their commitment and enthusiasm in a period of rapid expansion of services. They have made a real difference to thousands of patients who are now treated. The medical community plays a vital role as well, and I would like to thank those doctors, nurses and hospitals who have worked hard in patients' interests to arrange treatment through the Fund. Last, but by no means least, I would like to say a special word of thanks to the NTPF Liaison Officers in the various hospitals for making it happen.

Outlook

The development of the Patient Treatment Register will give the Fund the opportunity to offer treatment directly to patients and give patients the information they need to seek treatment. Continuous monitoring will ensure an accurate picture of waiting times for named patients and specific procedures. With the Register, we will have actual lists of people so we will know exactly how many patients there are. For the first time patients will be actively informed, involved and empowered in the whole process. Ultimately it will give us accurate information to enable us to ensure more patients are treated more quickly.

The NTPF has funding of €64 million for 2005 and has substantial capacity to treat more patients. It will continue to focus on reducing waiting times. We will also continue to increase awareness of the NTPF, work towards the Government's Health Strategy targets and achieve our own treatment targets in 2005.

We have set a target for 2005 to treat 16,000 in-patients and to reduce waiting times further. We look forward to continued cooperation from all stakeholders in delivering on our commitments to patients.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat O'Byrne'.

Pat O'Byrne
Chief Executive

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Maureen P. Lynott
Chairperson



Lenore Mrkwicka



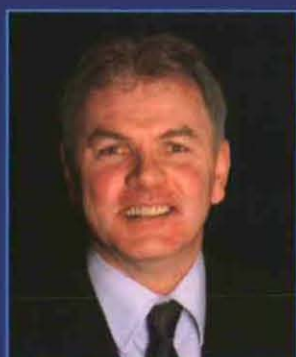
John Stephens



Christy Nolan



Frank Chambers



John O'Dwyer



Ray Doherty



Victor Boyhan



Mary Brazil



THE NATIONAL TREATMENT PURCHASE FUND: ENSURING QUALITY

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) was introduced by the Government in order to focus on the needs of public patients who are waiting longest for operations and dramatically reduce the times that they wait. The reasons behind long waits for treatment in the public sector are complex and multi-factorial. There is, however, spare capacity within the private sector, both in Ireland and the UK. The NTPF was established to utilise this spare capacity in the private sector for public patients. The aim, therefore, of the NTPF was to help provide the extra capacity needed to deliver swift access to treatment for public patients and to stimulate innovative models of service delivery and drive-up productivity.

One of the overriding principles in the setting up of the NTPF was to ensure that the patient had access to high quality surgical care. Without stating the obvious, this would help ensure that those consultants referring patients from their long waiting lists would have confidence in the system and that this would also be reflected in patient acceptance levels.

To ensure the highest quality of service, it was important to accredit both those delivering the service and the hospitals where the service would be delivered. Further, feedback and outcomes were received from surgeons participating in NTPF work and from those patients who had received treatment to ensure adequate quality assurance.

The accreditation of surgeons is easily standardised by accepting those qualifications from any surgeon who is on the specialist register of the Irish Medical Council. The specialist register guarantees to the public that the surgeon has reached adequate skills and competency levels within their training programmes.

The inspection of hospitals and, in particular, the surgical units and operating theatres within those hospitals was carried out in conjunction with the Director of Patient Care of the NTPF.

Elective surgery lends itself to straightforward quality assurance by looking at surgical outcomes. Within the first 18 months of this programme, the surgical outcomes in all surgical procedures have been equivalent to or in some cases better than those achieved in national and internationally published series.

In conclusion, this office will continue in its efforts to ensure the highest standards for the delivery of surgical care to those patients who have been referred to the NTPF.

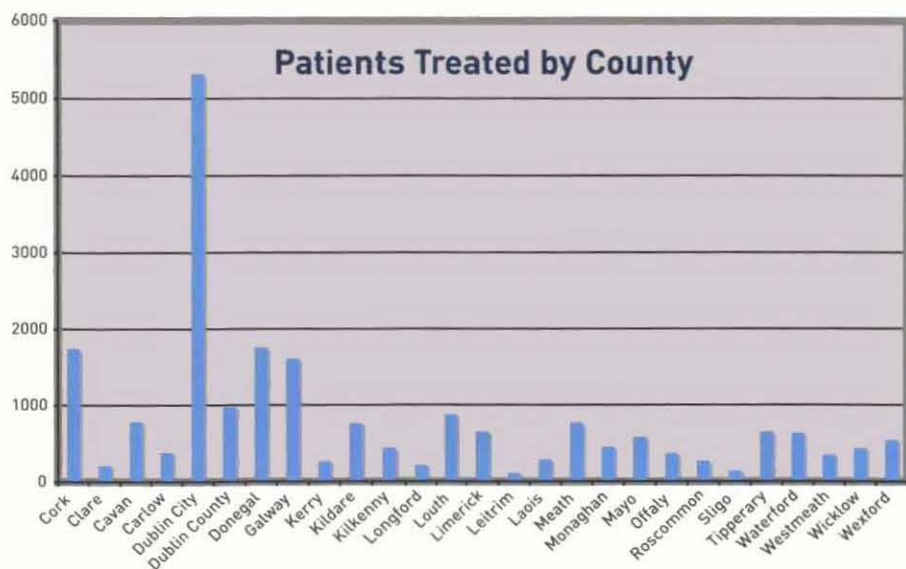
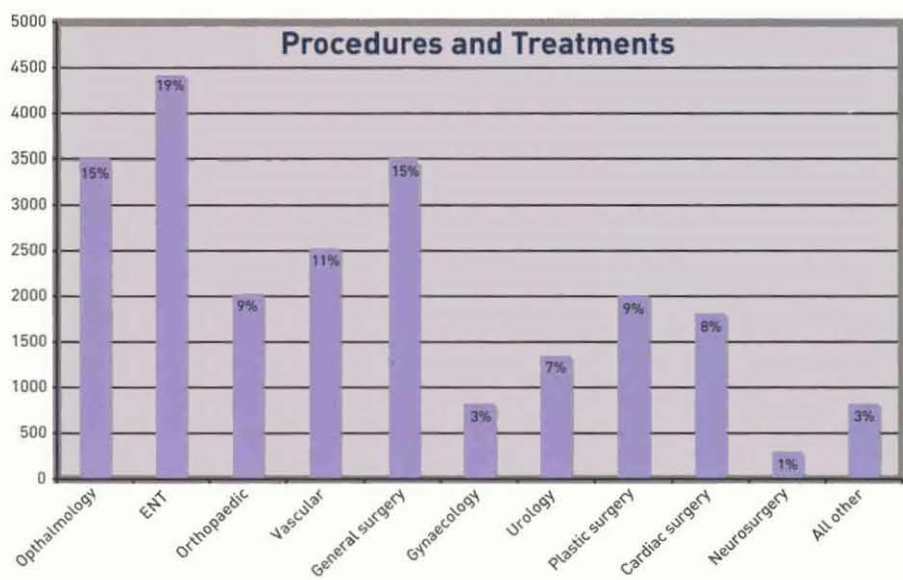
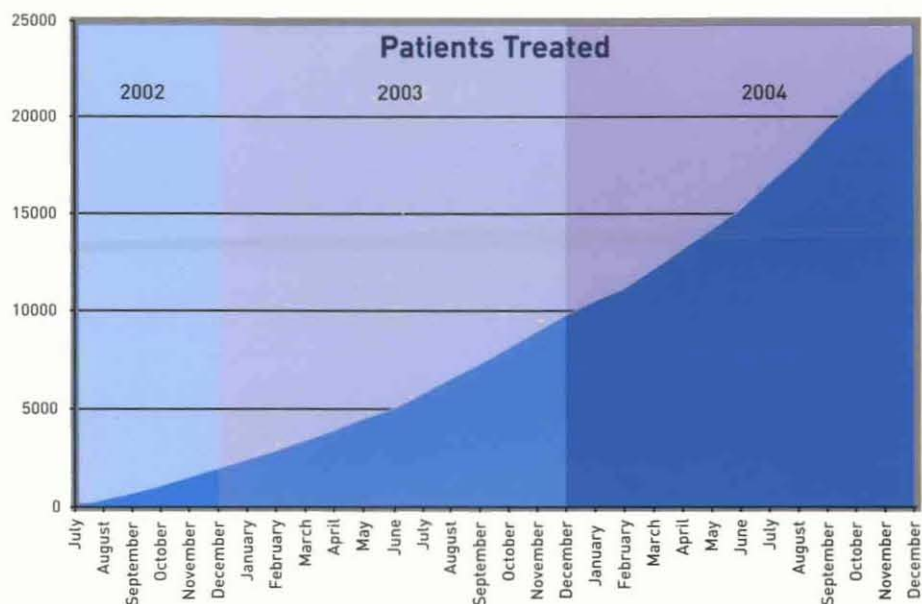
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Tanner', written over a horizontal line.

Professor Arthur Tanner MD, FRCSI, FRCSEd, FFSEM
Chief Medical Adviser, NTPF

PATIENTS TREATED

JULY 2002 - DECEMBER 2004

To date, 23,379 patients have been treated.



PATIENT FEEDBACK

"From the time I was referred to you I cannot begin to tell you the difference to my quality of life and me."

"An experience that I might otherwise have found daunting was filled with reassurance and confidence."

"The treatment I received both by the consultant and with the staff during my overnight stay in hospital was second-to-none, truly professional, **FAULTLESS.**"

"I will be forever grateful to you all for giving me back better eyesight, the difference it has made is truly remarkable."

"The treatment received was outstanding, I could not praise it enough."

"The Treatment Purchase Fund was excellent for me. You might feel that travelling to the UK for treatment might be a lot of hassle, but it isn't."

"I was delighted to get my hip replacement having waited for eight years. The NTPF ensured that all the arrangements were made for me and that my stay in hospital was as comfortable as possible. It has given me a new lease of life."



PATIENT TREATMENT REGISTER

PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST

The creation of a new Patient Treatment Register is essential because the old waiting lists were based on unconfirmed statistics and did not accurately reflect the actual number of patients waiting for treatment or the length of time patients were waiting.

"What is a waiting list?" was the first question the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) asked when given the responsibility for recording and publishing national waiting lists earlier this year. The old waiting lists were based on statistics - numbers that could not be accurately confirmed, that is, they had no details on patient names or how to contact them. In order to deal effectively with waiting lists going forward, a national, computerised database is needed that will accurately tell us who is waiting for treatment, for how long and for what.

For this reason, the NTPF is committed to a Patient Treatment Register, to take the place of the existing "waiting list". This new register will contain the name of every patient waiting for surgery, as well as their address, type of surgery needed and length of time they are waiting for treatment. It will be a register, reflecting the actual (and sometimes changing) status of each patient. Up until now, if a patient's status changed while on the list, for example, if they became pregnant, went away on holidays or did not want to avail of treatment at the particular time it was offered, it was not captured. Further, some patients requiring day care or diagnostic procedures were included, some were not.

Since the NTPF was given responsibility in mid 2004 for recording and publishing the surgical waiting lists, it has collated the data sent in by hospitals and health boards and has analysed this data in detail. It discovered that different hospitals and health boards have different systems to collate waiting list data. In general, the collection systems used tended to be overly manual and operated under inconsistent definitions and guidelines.

In conjunction with public hospitals, what is planned is an accountable, authoritative and transparent Patient Treatment Register. For the first time, all patients will receive a Patient Treatment Register card. This will help empower patients so they are not passively waiting for treatment: they can contact the NTPF Lo-call line after three months so that their treatment can be arranged. Alternatively the NTPF can contact the patient and offer them treatment.



According to the Tanaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, T.D. "The new Patient Treatment Register will provide, for the first time, a true record of actual patients and will tell us the real extent of waiting lists, and more importantly waiting times. With a national register, patients will be contacted, offered treatment and have the option to wait in their local hospital or avail of treatment in another hospital. Additionally patients and their GPs will be able to access a website showing waiting times for surgical procedures in different hospitals around the country. This system puts more power, choice and information into the patients' hands."

The NTPF will introduce the new register on a phased basis starting in July 2005 and will have the new national system in place in 2006. This initiative is building on the work undertaken by the Eastern Regional Health Authority / Dublin Academic Teaching Hospitals consolidated waiting list management project. The register will be a national online system developed with cooperation from all hospitals. Hospitals will be able to access it. The NTPF will capture current patient details and changes to a patient's status. The system will interface with each hospital's current patient administration system so that there is a minimum of interference and disruption. To ensure uniformity in the method of collating data, each hospital will follow agreed national operating guidelines. The NTPF will carry out a regular audit of the system to check it is up-to-date and accurate and is being used correctly. It is important to reiterate that the NTPF is a resource that hospitals can use in order to treat patients more quickly and it is united with them in the aim of getting patients off waiting lists, into operating theatres and home to their families.

When the NTPF was established in 2002 it took account of international best practice. Similarly, in preparing for Ireland's first national online Patient Treatment Register we have learnt from systems already in use in Sweden, Spain, Australia and Canada.

For example, in New South Wales, Australia they have developed a database, accessible through the government website, which contains information about waiting times for surgical and medical procedures in public hospitals and which is updated quarterly. It gives the latest data on waiting times according to type of procedure, urgency, hospital, and specialist doctor in order to assist patients and their doctors in making an informed decision in planning their admission to a public hospital.

The benefits of a new register are that patients will be empowered, informed and involved in arranging their own treatment and that all information on the register will be accurate, reconcilable and reliable.

Continuing to publish unverifiable data serves no useful purpose for patients or public accountability. Along with the hospitals, we want to get patients treated and get waiting times down to the lowest possible level. To do this effectively, we need credible information on the number of actual patients waiting: who they are, what treatment they need and how long they are waiting. With the implementation of the new register, more choice and more information will be put into patients' hands.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund has drawn attention to it's aims and kept patients informed about it's services.



NO REASON TO WAIT FOR CATARACT OPERATIONS IN DUBLIN

CALL THE NTPF NOW - YOU'RE ENTITLED TO TREATMENT



Public patients waiting over three months on a public hospital waiting list in Dublin for cataract operations are entitled to free treatment. Call the NTPF today on 1890 720 820 and you will be treated quickly. Thousands have been treated so why should YOU wait any longer?

Call Lo-Call 1890 720 820
today for further information
www.ntpf.ie



www.ntpf.ie



LOOKING FORWARD TO A BETTER NEW YEAR

Has your child waited for more than 3 months on a public hospital waiting list or have you waited longer than 6 months?

If so, take advantage of **FREE** treatment available under the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

Just call Lo-Call 1890 720 820 - if you qualify, your treatment will be scheduled before the new year and you will be treated in a matter of weeks.

DO YOU QUALIFY? FIND OUT NOW FOR THE COST OF A LOCAL CALL.

Lo-Call 1890 720820



www.ntpf.ie

January 2004

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
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MAKE YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Take advantage of **FREE** treatment available under the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

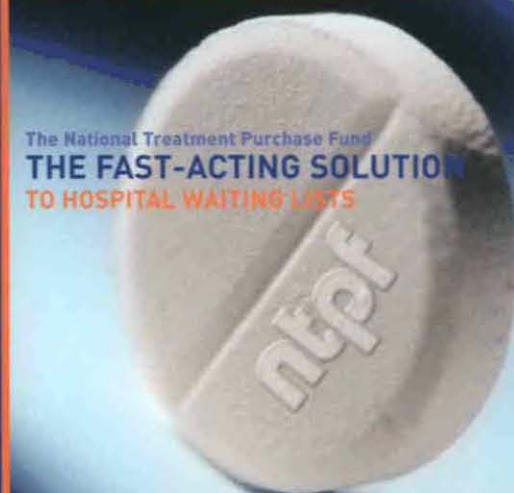
If your child has waited for more than 3 months or you have waited longer than 6 months - Call Lo-Call 1890 720 820.

If you qualify, your treatment will be arranged and you will be treated in a matter of weeks.

DO YOU QUALIFY? FIND OUT NOW FOR THE COST OF A LOCAL CALL.

Lo-Call 1890 720820

The National Treatment Purchase Fund THE FAST-ACTING SOLUTION TO HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS



If you're stuck on a public hospital waiting list for 3 months or more, contact the NTPF now to see if you qualify for faster treatment. You could be treated in a matter of weeks and back to normal life a lot faster than you thought. Treatment is given at over a wide range of hospitals (including your own local hospital), day and home care, cataracts, gall bladder and hernia.



Lo-Call 1890 720 820
today for further information
www.ntpf.ie

TREATING PEOPLE, FASTER

'I've got no more pain'

OLGA CRONIN talks to a mother and son who received corrective surgery under the National Treatment Purchase Fund



A CORK mother and son who endured years of waiting for corrective surgery now breathe a sigh of relief. Bernadette and her 22-year-old son Paul, from Blarney, received surgical treatment free of charge under the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) last year.

Bernadette received treatment for arthritis problems in her hand, while Paul, who underwent years of orthodontic treatment, had an operation to bring his upper and lower teeth in line with each other.

In November 2001, the NTPF was set up under the National Health Strategy to take the public patients who have been waiting longest for non-emergency procedures off waiting lists.

Under the Government-funded NTPF, more than 25,000 people have been treated.

Five years ago, Bernadette started to feel pain in three of her fingers and the thumb of her left hand. The pain was due to arthritis and she attended a specialist to treat it.

"It was a very restrictive and nagging pain - very dull and continuous," she said, adding that simple tasks such as unbuttoning her shirt and opening jam jars caused her severe pain.

Her treatment included cortisone and anti-inflammatory injections. These injections caused the pain in her fingers to decrease.

However, the pain in her thumb continued and she was told it needed to be operated on.

Two years passed and Bernadette still had no idea when she was going to get called for surgery.

In the meantime, she spotted a TV documentary about the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

"I was fascinated by what the documentary said. I never realised I would be a beneficiary of it," said Bernadette.

"I was fascinated by what the documentary said. I never realised I would be a beneficiary of it."

The Blarney woman then made further enquiries and was put in contact with the NTPF, which then took her details and noted her condition.

Six months later, a UK specialist flew to Cork to see Bernadette.

Another two months later, in July of last year, Bernadette was picked up from her front door and taken to Cork Airport. She was then flown business-class to London, where a car was waiting to pick her up and take her to the clinic in Hampshire, England.

"The organisation was absolutely fantastic," she said, adding that the travel expenses of her husband, Humphrey, were also paid for by the NTPF.

Bernadette had a bone removed from her wrist to prevent the arthritis in her thumb.

Now the five-year-old pains in her hand were gone.

"I cannot praise the NTPF scheme enough. I've told everybody I know about it," she said.



MOTHER AND SON: Bernadette McCarthy and her son Paul at the home in Tower, Co. Cork. Picture: Richard Mills

25,000 people treated under NTPF scheme

THE FACTS

THE National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) was established under the National Health Strategy launched in November 2001 by then Minister for Health and Children Michael Martin.

● The purpose of the NTPF is to take public patients who have been waiting longest for non-emergency procedures off waiting lists.

● More than 25,000 patients have been treated to date.

● The NTPF has the capacity to treat a maximum of 1,000 patients per month - 600 mainly in private hospitals in Ireland and 200 in four private hospitals in the UK.

● €64 million has been committed to the NTPF for 2005.

● Public patients waiting more than

18 months for surgical treatment qualify for treatment under the NTPF.

● Examples of procedures covered under the NTPF include: cataracts, varicose veins, hernias, gall bladders, prostate, cysts, plastic surgery, cardiac surgery, hip and knee operations and back and spine surgery.

● The treatment is free and it does not affect patients' medical cards.

● If a patient needs to travel to the UK or another country for treatment, the NTPF will pay for a parent, guardian or companion to accompany the patient as well as their accommodation costs.

place in a number of private Dublin hospitals at the end of June 2002.

● Patients who do receive NTPF treatment may be treated by their current consultant in a private hospital in Ireland, another consultant in a private hospital in Ireland or in another consultant in a private hospital in the UK or another country.

● In the Health Services Executive Southern Area, the Bon Secours in Cork and Tralee are participating in giving treatment under the scheme.

● In July of this year, the NTPF will introduce the new Patient Treatment Register on a phased basis. The Patient Treatment Register will be a national online system, capturing current patient details and changes to a patient's

How the treatment

It has improved my quality of life

CASE STUDY

STEPHEN MOLONEY had been waiting for a hernia operation at Dublin's Beaumont Hospital for over two years.

But his life changed for the better when his wife, Margaret, heard a radio ad about the new Treatment Purchase Fund and decided to make a phone call.

"She knew that I had been waiting for a long time

so she rang the number to find out if I could be treated this way," said Artane man Stephen.

"I was offered treatment in the BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, which is near Manchester, and I was delighted to find out that I could be treated within a few weeks."

"I didn't mind having to travel to England for treatment, as otherwise I could have been waiting for at least another year," he said.

The Fund made all the arrangements for Stephen to travel for his surgery - and Margaret also travelled with him as the Fund makes arrangements for a travelling companion.



DELIGHT: Moloney

Stephen has very positive memories of his experience.

"I couldn't believe how hassle-free the trip and treatment was. The operation has made an enormous improvement to my quality of life."

A new lease of life for Artane grandfather

DARREN BOYLE

ARTANE grandfather Patrick Boland has seen a different side of the Irish health service, which seems to be going deeper into crisis every day.

The 72-year-old is one of the 4,200 patients treated under the National Treatment Purchase Fund, a programme set up to stop adults waiting for operations for more than 12 months and children for more than six months.

Thanks to the fund, the widower says he can return to normal life. He was waiting for an operation on a hernia that was progressively getting worse.

"I went to see my consultant in Beaumont Hospital and he told me that I could get the operation done in the Mater Private."

"I have always been active. I enjoy ballroom dancing and bowling, but my hernia was getting worse. It was getting more difficult to bend over. The lump was getting bigger every week."

"I went into the hospital on a Monday. The operation took place on the Tuesday and I was released on the Thursday."

"I never expected that I would have been treated in the Mater Private. The place is far better than a hotel. The place is absolutely amazing."

"After about two or three weeks I was back fighting fit. I have had no problems at all

since I have had to go back for a check up but that was routine. It is great because I am now back to normal. It was getting difficult to play bowls."

Patrick has eight children and 14 grandchildren. "It is important being active with the grandchildren. You have to be able to play with kids."

"The operation has given me life back. I can now go ballroom dancing again and chase the grandkids," he quipped.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) was established to treat privately

public patients who have been stuck on waiting lists for more than twelve months in the case of adults or six months in the case of children.

The NTPF can treat people in private hospitals in Ireland and in Britain.

The treatment is entirely free to the patient and if they have to travel to Britain, the travelling and accommodation expenses for the patient and a companion are also covered.

Despite the chronic cutbacks in the health service, the Government has ring-fenced

€31m to be spent on the fund in 2003.

The fund has a capacity to treat 600 patients a month, with 200 travelling to either Britain or the north.

Patients can be referred for treatment under the scheme by their hospital consultant or general practitioner. It is also possible to contact the fund directly to see if they are eligible for treatment.

Only a limited number of procedures are covered by the fund. They include operations on cataracts, varicose veins, hernias, gall bladders, prostate, cysts and plastic surgery, cardiac surgery and knee or hip operations.

For further information on the fund, call 1890 720 820.



Patrick Boland can now enjoy his active lifestyle once again. Picture: Finbar O'Rourke

TREATMENT IN ENGLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

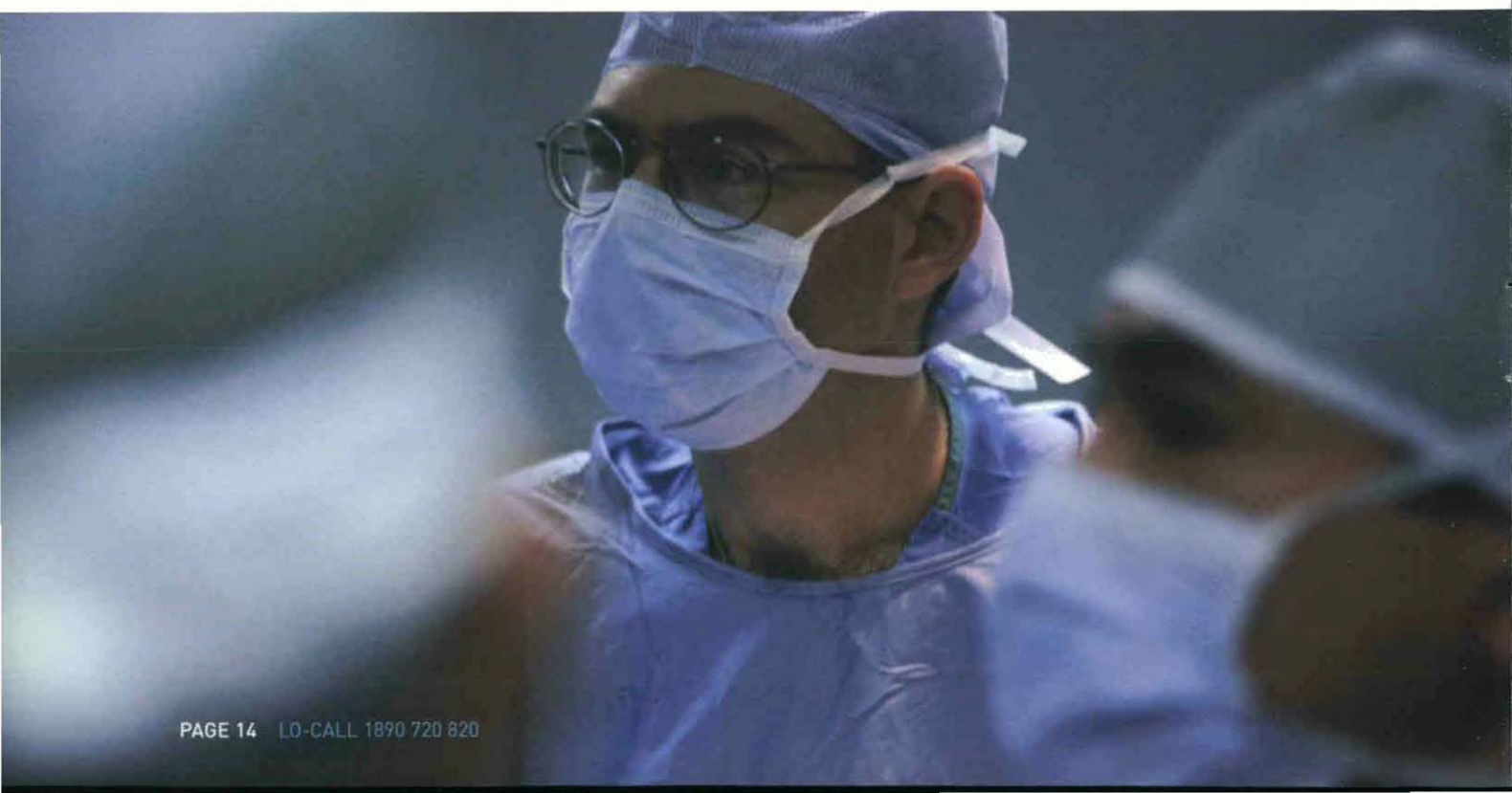
To end 2004, the NTPF has treated 1,522 patients outside the state. The opportunity exists to treat more patients in these locations. The process is simple and easy to avail of, with the highest quality care available.

All hospitals participating in the NTPF initiative have been carefully assessed by the NTPF to ensure they meet strict quality standards. The five hospitals in England and Northern Ireland that the NTPF have approved for use in the treatment of patients are:

- Bupa Murrayfield
- Bupa Manchester
- BMI Runnymede Hospital
- BMU Hampshire Clinic, Basingstoke
- The North West Independent Hospital, Derry

A number of treatments are available in these hospitals in England and Northern Ireland, such as: cataracts; varicose veins; hip and knee replacements; back and spinal operations; hernias; gall bladders; prostate surgery; plastic surgery and cardiac surgery. 12 children have also been referred to the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore in the US for cardiac surgery.

Once referred and a patient is willing to travel, treatment is arranged quickly. All necessary arrangements are made for the patient and a travelling companion. Patients are collected from their homes and brought to the airport, met at the UK airport and brought to the treating hospital and then also driven back to the UK airport and driven from the Irish airport to their homes. All other arrangements that need to be in place before the patient travels are organised by the NTPF liaison officer and this officer is in constant contact with the patient to ensure that the treatment goes well and that the patient is happy with the level of service being received.



HOW TO ACCESS TREATMENT

Treatment is available for any public patient who is waiting longer than three months on a public hospital waiting list for a surgical operation. Patients can ask their general practitioner, consultant or hospital to refer them to the NTPF or they can contact the NTPF directly on Lo-Call 1890 720 820.

PATIENTS TELL THEIR STORIES



Phyllis Brophy from Ashbourne, County Meath had been waiting for almost two years at the Mater Hospital, Dublin for an ENT procedure. Her GP recommended that she contact the NTPF on its Lo-Call number to have her treatment arranged quickly. She had her operation in the Hampshire clinic, which is close to Heathrow Airport, London, within a few weeks of her initial call. Phyllis kept a diary of her trip to England for treatment.

I started to get problems with my sinus a good few years ago but it gradually got to the point where I could no longer breathe properly through my nose. As I was breathing through my mouth it was always dry and uncomfortable and I would have to always have a drink of water at hand. I was also constantly blowing my nose and it became such an inconvenience that we had to cancel our family holiday. The only way it could be fixed was by having an operation.

I was delighted when the NTPF rang me to tell me my wait was over. At first, I was a little apprehensive about travelling to England for treatment but when they told me that all the flights and transfers were being organised and that I could bring my husband, I didn't mind.



Patrick Daly from Cork was the 10,000th patient to be treated by the National Treatment Purchase Fund. Patrick had an orthopaedic hand procedure at the Hampshire clinic in the UK in January 2004.

Patrick was understandably delighted to have been treated after having been on a waiting list for his operation for over a year. "The Treatment Purchase Fund was a godsend to me, and my quality of life has improved immeasurably since the operation. I would like to extend special thanks to the people at the Hampshire Clinic who couldn't have been kinder."

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Summary of Financial Details
For the year ended 31 December 2004

	Notes	Actuals €	%
Income for the Year		<u>44,005,192</u>	
Activity During The Year			
Patient Care Invoices - paid and payable	1		
Direct Patient Care Expense		40,560,258	90.95%
Indirect Patient Care Expense		<u>1,478,541</u>	3.32%
		42,038,799	94.27%
Administration - paid and payable		<u>2,559,764</u>	5.73%
		<u><u>44,598,563</u></u>	100.00%

TOP TEN PROCEDURES

	Cases
1 Cataracts	1,556
2 Procedure Scopes	1,417
3 Tonsillectomy	1,230
4 Varicose Veins	636
5 Joint Replacements (Hips, Knees, Shoulders)	618
6 Cardiac Surgery / Cardiology	873
7 Skin Lesions	306
8 Hernias	271
9 Grommets	176
10 Cholecystectomy / Gall Bladder	138
Total	<u><u>7,221</u></u>

	Cases	Value €	Average Cost €
Average Patient Cost	<u>13,627</u>	<u>42,038,799</u>	<u>3,085</u>

Notes

1 Treatments not invoiced at 31 December 2004 have not been included.

Financial Statements for NTPF in respect of the eight months to 31 December 2004 which is the first statutory accounting period will be presented separately.



DR ANTHONY PEACOCK
A GP'S PERSPECTIVE

