

Executive Summary

This is Part I of a wider report on Orthopaedic Surgery in Ontario in the era of the Wait Time Strategy, which addresses the workload of orthopaedic surgeons to provide information for an informed debate on enhancing orthopedic care and access to surgery. This report entitled Patterns of Use of Orthopaedic Surgeon Services in Ontario 2005/06 including time trends in surgery from 1992 to 2005; provides information on the balance of surgical and ambulatory care and provides a preliminary assessment of the impact of the wait time strategy to date. This information can be used in the development of initiatives that help to maximise the use of surgical time to increase capacity in the system and to decrease waiting times, particularly for total joint replacement (TJR), and at the same ensure that other vital areas of care are recognized and not neglected.

Key Findings

- In 2005/06, over 600 thousand Ontarians had over 1,3 million encounters* with orthopaedic surgeons. Of those 86% were ambulatory encounters and the remaining 14% were in hospital encounters (Inpatient, Emergency department, Same day surgery). Overall, orthopaedic surgeons carried out over 140 thousand surgeries in Ontario, 58% these as inpatient surgeries.
- TJR accounted for 25% of all surgeries carried out by orthopaedic surgeons in Ontario, while arthroscopic repairs accounted for 16% and reductions with or without fixations accounted for 21% of all surgeries, respectively. Moreover, arthritis-related surgeries accounted for more than half of all surgeries performed by orthopaedic surgeons.
- Over one third of all arthritis-related surgeries were TJR and almost another third were arthroscopy. 15% of trauma-related surgeries were TJR (mostly, partial hip replacements) and 46% were reductions with fixations.
- The knee was the most common anatomic site to get an orthopaedic surgery, followed by the hip and shoulder and elbow.
- Arthroscopic surgery was more commonly performed in younger men and TJR in older women.
- Of the 1.1 million ambulatory encounters with orthopaedic surgeons, representing 500 thousand people, the majority were for a traumatic condition (48%) (e.g. sprains, strains, fractures, dislocations) followed by arthritis and related conditions (35%). Visits for osteoarthritis, the most frequent reason for TJR, accounted for 16% of all encounters. On average, Ontarians who visited an orthopaedic surgeon had two ambulatory encounters in 2005/2006.
- Approximately 25% of people with an ambulatory encounter with orthopaedic surgeon are estimated to have an orthopaedic surgery.
- The number of surgeries carried out increased steadily over the period 1992/93 to 2005/06 with much of this increase associated with increased numbers of TJR. There was a notable increase of over ten thousand TJRs carried by orthopaedic surgeons between 2002/03 and 2005/06, with much of this increase taking place between 2004/05 and 2005/06 when the number of TJRs increased by over five thousand. This coincided with the initiation of the Ontario Wait Strategy. At the same time the number of other surgeries remained relatively stable.

Future Directions

Part II will provide a detailed breakdown by LHIN, including information on cross-boundary flow for surgery.

*An *Encounter* is a visit to an orthopaedic surgeon where medical care was provided.