



Dr. Anthony Peacock is a General Practitioner based in Dublin, he has practiced in Terenure since 1980.

How did you hear about the NTPF?

I initially heard of the NTPF through media coverage and I also received a patient information booklet and poster from the Fund which highlighted patients' entitlements. The information booklet is made available to patients in our surgery waiting room.

What are your patients' reactions to the NTPF when you tell them about it?

My experience is that patients who have waited for a long time on a public hospital waiting list are delighted to hear that they can have their treatment arranged for free in a matter of weeks by the NTPF. While their conditions are not life threatening they nonetheless suffer great discomfort and poor quality of life with conditions such as hernia, tonsils and hip and knee replacement requirements.

Can you tell me about one of the patients you have referred to the NTPF?

One of my patients was treated last October for a hip replacement operation. She had been waiting for the operation for almost two years and faced a further wait and was delighted when the NTPF arranged her treatment within two weeks. It was a wonderful early Christmas gift for her and it has added hugely to her quality of life.

What type of procedures have you referred your patients for?

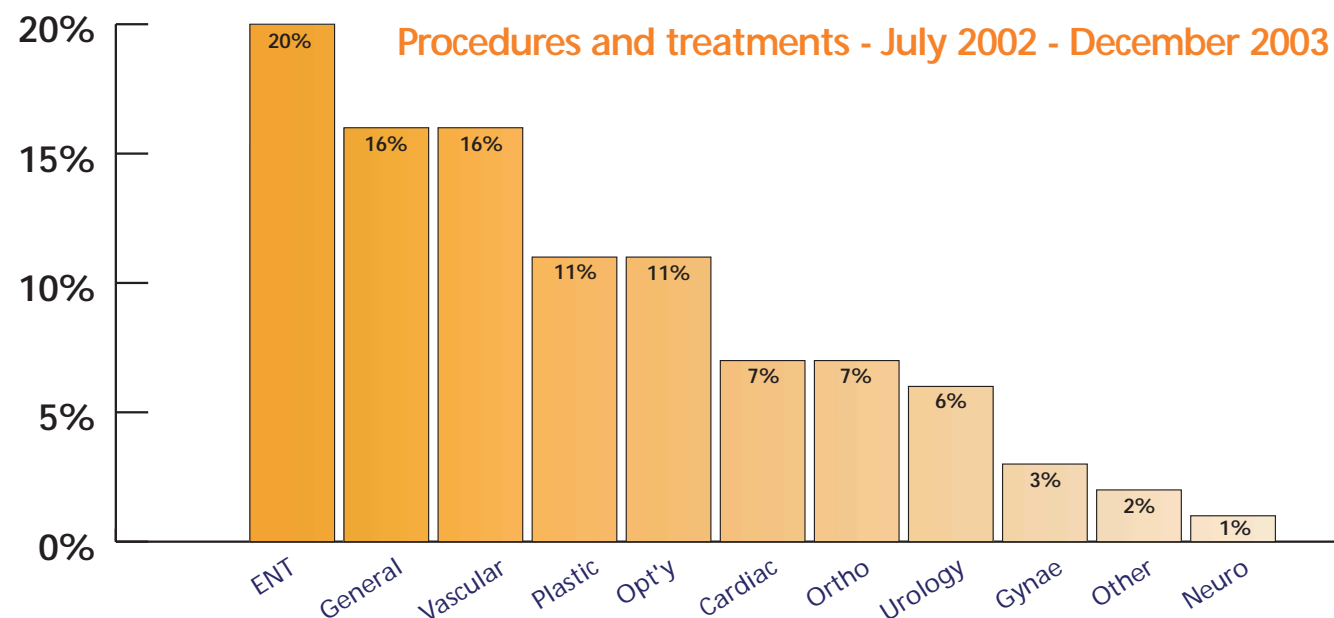
All the patients that I have referred have been referred for orthopaedic procedures.

Would you urge other GPs to refer their patients to the NTPF?

I would recommend that my fellow GPs contact the NTPF if any of their adult patients are waiting longer than six months or their paediatric patients are on a waiting list for more than three months. The NTPF make it very easy by having a Lo-Call number and they make all the arrangements for the patient, keeping the referring doctor up-to-date on the progress of the patient.

Procedures and treatments

The Fund has continued to provide treatments for a wide range of surgical procedures. In the period between July 2002 and December 2003, the most common procedures covered under the fund included ENT, Vascular and General (such as Gall Bladder, Excisions and Hernia). The full break down of procedures can be seen in the graph below.



An Ciste Náisiúnta um Cheannach Cóireála

Call Lo-Call 1890 720 820 - Visit www.ntpf.ie

Looking to 2004

Welcome to the second edition of NTPF news. Since our last edition in July, 2003 I am pleased to report to you, our stakeholders, that the Fund has made significant progress in reducing the length of time public patients have to wait for surgical procedures.

As the Minister states, over 10,000 adults and children have now been taken off public hospital waiting lists since the treatment of our first patient in July, 2002.

The vast majority of these patients have been treated in private hospitals in Ireland, with 625 patients treated in Northern Ireland and England. Furthermore, over 7,200 patients have called the NTPF on the Lo-Call information line leading directly to the treatment of 1,600 patients.

Since the establishment of the NTPF, waiting times have, on average, halved, with 65% of health boards and hospitals now referring patients waiting between six and twelve months.

Our main target for 2004 is to continue to reduce the length of time patients wait for operations. This year a new system will be introduced ensuring all qualifying adults and children will be routinely contacted about the NTPF by their treating hospitals. We have set a target of treating 11,000 patients in 2004 and this is just one of the initiatives which will help us meet this goal.

I look forward to the continued co-operation of all those involved in the coming year.

Maureen P. Lynott
Director, NTPF

NTPF treats 10,000th patient



Mr 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."

like to extend special thanks to the people at the Hampshire Clinic who couldn't have been kinder."

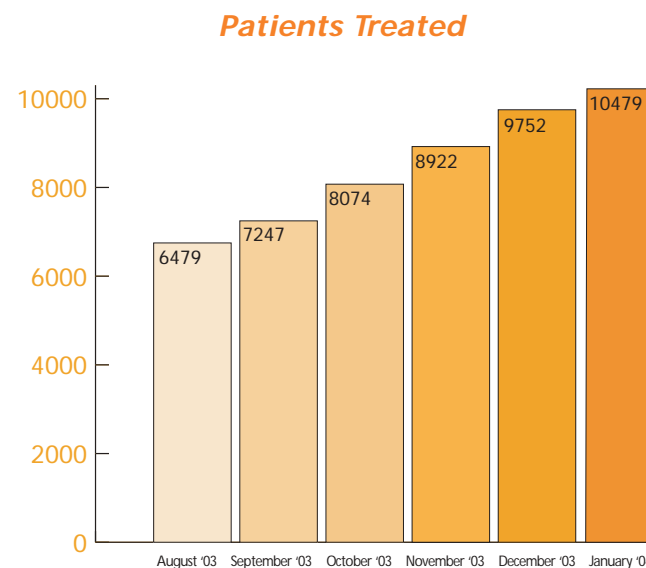
Chief Executive of the NTPF, Pat O' Byrne said "We are delighted to have reached this landmark figure and that is testament to the hard work of all our staff and partners in the healthcare sector."



Minister pleased with progress

I am pleased to say that 2003 was a good year for the National Treatment Purchase Fund. To date over 10,000 patients have been treated and, more importantly, the waiting times for surgical procedures have been significantly reduced. This has been made possible by targeting special funding towards those who have waited longest for surgery. I am committed to reducing in-patient waiting lists further and to reaching the targets set out in the Health Strategy. While the setting of these targets was ambitious, we are within sight of achieving our goal, of not having patients waiting longer than three months for surgery, in some of our hospitals. The progress achieved by the NTPF to date is the result of health boards, hospitals and doctors working together for the benefit of patients. I have no doubt that with the continuing cooperation and goodwill that exists, further progress in reducing waiting times for surgery will be made. I wish all those involved in this initiative every success for 2004.

Micheál Martin TD
Minister for Health and Children



NTPF website

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) launched its website in July 2003. To date there have been hundreds of visitors to the site. Designed in a clear and easy to use way, the site provides an ideal outlet for healthcare professionals and members of the general public alike to source information on the Fund.

The website contains all the information potential patients need to know with everything from location of hospitals and procedures covered under the Fund, to personal experiences of a number of people who received treatment.

A separate section is included for Healthcare professionals with key questions that they or their patients may have.

The website can be accessed on www.ntpf.ie



Hospital profile - BUPA Murrayfield, Manchester



Almost 250 patients have been treated in the UK to date under the NTPF, of these 60 were treated in the BUPA Murrayfield hospital. Outlined below is a profile of the hospital and extracts from an interview with their NTPF liaison officer.

THE HOSPITAL

BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, Wirral, is situated in the Merseyside region of England. The hospital has a total of 63 beds comprising of 49 private beds, 12 day-care beds and 2 critical care beds, as well as 3 operating theatres.

Consultants practising at BUPA Murrayfield Hospital offer a broad range of medical expertise and include those specialising in the treatment of thyroid problems, cancer, arthritis, sports medicine, physiotherapy, dermatology and cosmetic surgery. This expertise is supported by professional staff, providing care within a friendly and comfortable environment. Quality assurance of its services is demonstrated through ISO 9002 and the Health Quality Services (HOS) Accreditation.

To support the work of the consultants and clinical specialists, the hospital has its own pathology and radiology departments with mobile MRI and CT units. A pharmacy is also located within the building.

To ensure patients are satisfied with the level of care they receive, BUPA Murrayfield Hospital conducts patient satisfaction surveys every year. The results of their 2002 survey found that 97% patients rate the hospital as excellent/good at preparing them for their stay, and 91% rate it as excellent/good at preparing patients for discharge back home. Most impressively, 99% patients treated in the Hospital in 2002 rated the care they received from their consultant as excellent or very good.

NTPF patients who are treated at the hospital are flown to Manchester Airport and met at the airport by a hospital representative who transports them to the hospital where the NTPF liaison officer meets them. Under the NTPF scheme, a companion may accompany the patient. All their travel arrangements and associated costs are taken care of by the Fund.

Linda Bennett

NTPF Liaison Officer in BUPA Murrayfield

My Role

"When we get a referral from Ireland, either I or one of the team phones the patient to discuss dates, explain the process and reassure them. We liaise with the consultants regarding the admission. We send an admission pack to the patient, to help them absorb the information, then we liaise with the travel and taxi firms, so all the travel arrangements are looked after. We also liaise with the NTPF if any medical queries arise."

Patient Support

"The pre-admission information is pretty extensive and covers any questions patients may have. This ensures that they are very clear on the procedure when they arrive. After waiting so long, most patients are delighted to come, to receive their treatment. We also speak to their companions to explain the travel and hotel arrangements and provide them with any necessary tourist information."

"I greet patients when they arrive, visit them during their stay and see them on the day of discharge. I make sure they know what happens when they go home. Their first contact is their GP, but they have my telephone number too. Ninety per cent of patients don't need to come back, but sometimes they have to come back so we can check their rehabilitation."

Experience

"Our hospital has been open for 21 years and we have brought people from the Isle of Man for operations, so it's not unusual to have people travel long distances to the hospital. We are pretty experienced at this. We like patients to arrive the day before the operation and we usually keep them a day longer to make sure they're fit to travel home. If there are any complications, we can re-arrange the travel. We haven't had any problems so far. Patients and their companions are very well looked after, so it's not a scary experience for them."

Phyllis' diary

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 on 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.

Monday, 17th November 2003

I didn't sleep much the night before I went to England for my operation but there was nothing new in that as I hadn't had a night's sleep in over two years.

TV3 was interested in my story about travelling to England for treatment and sent a camera crew to my house the morning I was due to fly. I think I was more nervous about being on telly than having my operation! When they left, a car arrived at the house to bring my husband, John, and myself to the airport. It was great that John could come with me and he was a great support.

When we came out of the arrivals hall in Heathrow there was a car waiting to take us to the Hampshire Clinic. The hospital was a short drive from the airport and once we were there it wasn't long until I was checked into my room.

I met the surgeon that same afternoon, he examined me and told me a bit about the surgery and that I was having my operation the next morning. John was put up by the NTPF in a local hotel and they also organised his taxi transfers. He was able to spend a good bit of time with me, including mealtimes.

Tuesday, 18th November 2003

I was taken down to the operating theatre early in the morning for my operation. When the anaesthetic wore off and I woke up it was great to see John in the room. I was very groggy for the rest of the day but the surgeon said that everything had gone well.

Wednesday, 19th November 2003

I was checked regularly during the day by the nurses and the surgeon examined me again and told me that I would be able to travel back the next day. I didn't feel the day passing with all the activity in the hospital. John was able to spend most of the day with me, which was great.

Thursday, 20th November 2003

The surgeon examined me one final time and gave me the all-clear to travel. Just like on the way over I was picked up at the hospital and brought to the airport. My flight arrived back in Dublin just after lunch and I was dropped back to the house. I was a really tired when I got home and I slept like a log!

All the nurses, doctors and the surgeon were really friendly and the care I received was top class. Since I had the operation I haven't looked back. The NTPF was really great for me and I'd recommend that if people are waiting for a long time to have their treatment carried out they should call them – it only took one call for me!

