# High Tech Imaging Review

September 2021







Context for our work
Our approach- in two parts
What we learned
What we recommend



#### Allen & Clarke will:

- (a) Undertake an analysis of current activities in ACC's High Tech Imaging (HTI) Services: including underlying ACC cost/volume drivers, areas of variation, outcomes being achieved from the service and the HTI service flows and dependencies
- (b) Undertake a review of the initial comparative work undertaken in 2019, that sought to compare ACC's pricing and funding of these services with other international jurisdictions including exploring the validity of such comparisons and where valid updating the comparative data
- (c) Assist ACC to explore likely future service changes and trends, including technological advances, changing use of diagnostic imaging within the Health Sector and population demographics as they relate to current service coverage and access
- (d) Contribute clinical and strategic expertise: to help ACC develop a set of performance measures that provides visibility of client outcomes achieved by the HTI services
- (e) Identify changes to aspects of the HTI funding model to improve the financial sustainability of the service to ACC, including providing clear rationale for any changes proposed
- (f) Deliver to ACC a report which summaries key findings and recommendations from activities (a) to (e)

## Our approach



Stage 1: Information collection and analysis

This stage focused on the collection and analysis of information relating to HTI activity and validation of the comparative work already undertaken (Health Sector Governance Board Update 2019), and assessed likely impacts on future service requirements based on current NZ and overseas trends.

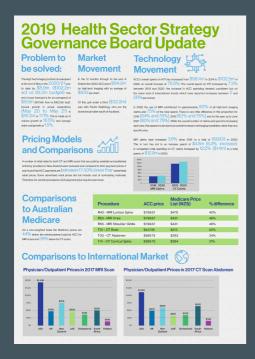
Stage 2: Human Centered Design

In this stage our attention turned to engagement with key parts of the HTI service delivery in order to better understand the current delivery process, identify any critical decision points and gaps, and determine what design changes may be beneficial to future service delivery.



Stage 1: Information collection and analysis

## Current state of play...



#### Costs continue to rise...

ACC's YTD spend under the High Tech Imaging contract, as at the end of May 2020/21, is \$8.9m over budget (\$102.2m act vs 93.3m budget).

The end of year forecast is for an overspend of \$9.5m (\$111.8m fore vs \$102.3m bud). Annual growth in actual expenditure (May 20 to May 21) is \$16.3m or 17.1%.

This is made up of volume growth at 16.5%, and average claim cost growth at 1.5%.

#### Specifically...

In 2020 the use of MRI contributed to approximately 82% of all high-tech imaging claims and 75% of the total spend. There is very little difference in this proportion for 2018 (84% and 78%), 2019 (82% and 76%) and for the year up to June 2021 (80% and 75%).

#### And interestingly...

While the overall number of claims and spend is increasing each year, this appears to be due to an overall increase in all imaging modalities, rather than any specific area.

While our review of publicly available retail rates for both MRI and CT's found that ACC payments range from 17-53% lower than advertised retail prices, comparisons to Medicare (Aus) show Medicare's reimbursement rates are on average 44% and 39% lower than ACC's.



# Drivers of volume...big picture

According to the Health at a Glance 2019: OECD indicators report, there is no general guideline or international benchmark regarding the ideal number of CT scanners or MRI units per million population. However, too few units may lead to access problems in terms of geographic proximity or waiting times. If there are too many, this may result in overuse of these costly diagnostic procedures, with little if any benefits for patients.



Data sourced form the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development shows that New Zealand sits in the middle of the pack when it comes to both the total number of MRI and CT scanner units per 1,000,000 population. Interestingly, New Zealand is marginally ahead of Australia in the number of MRI (15.31 vs 14.79 units per million people, respectively) yet Medicare pay on average 44% less than ACC.



## Drivers of volume ...



## **Aging Population**

Like much of the developed world, New Zealand has an aging population. In the years between 2000 and 2020 the percentage of New Zealand's population over the age of 65 increased from 11.8% to 15.6%. It is predicted that by 2046 this will be as high as 23%. It is expected that this trend is likely to remain as life expectancy continues to increase. Authors of a novel 2019 North American study investigated the High Tech Imaging rates across different populations. They found that for CT and MRI rates have been increasing across all age groups, with the an annual growth of between 2.2% to 4.9% occurring in the over 65-year-olds. [1]

## **Technology and certainty for physicians**

"Why have imaging rates increased so dramatically for CT and MRI, despite their high costs? One obvious explanation is that the techniques have improved so much over time that physicians may be using them for concerns that might not have prompted imaging in the past. For example, CT's speed and resolution for detecting pulmonary embolism have improved so dramatically over the past decade that CT is now the primary method used to evaluate this condition, and this has undoubtedly contributed to the dramatic rise in costs associated with imaging of the chest" [2]

## Future trends ...



## Al and ML (Machine Learning)

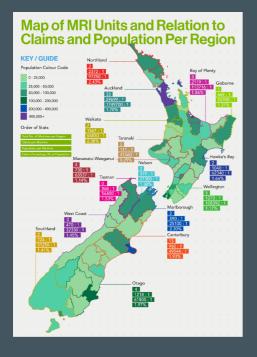
Both are currently being developed/used to categorize or flag scans to speed up processing and, where needed, referrals to specialists.

Future applications of Al and ML are hypothesised to range from supporting more complex imaging protocols to mining data for new disease markers.

#### **Blockchain**

Blockchain has several uses and advantages in medical imaging applications. Its main utility is around data security and could help prevent data breaches that have occurred recently in health care and, if they do occur, enable continued functionality. It also has the potential for increased cyber and data security in terms of data sharing which may support innovation in real-time image processing and advances in interpretation, such as the use of ML.

# One point in particular...





One area of specific interest for ACC Does proximity to HTI machines increased the number of scans performed? Our analysis showed that not to be the case but rather the relationship of size of population to no. of scans was an influential factor.



In attempting to answer this question we were surprised that we were unable to find a "national inventory" of MRI machinery so in order to complete this work we created one - shown at right. Note this is MRI specific only and based on publicly available information.



**Stage 2: Human Centred Design** 















One-on-one empathy interviews with sector participants

Raw data turned into process maps and insights distiled for use in problem definition

Insights then used to determine the Design Challenges (or Problems to Solve)

## What did we learn...?



## Some of the more interesting outtakes...

- \*HTI volumes and demand will continue to grow as they are used as a key tool for both diagnosis and supporting treatment options. ie surgery planning, technology advancements ie implant design
- \*And as such, HTI's are no longer the exception and are fast becoming the norm
- \*The HTI contract is an important tool in achieving great patient outcomes but not an outcome in itself
- \*The current HTI experience is inconsistent and can be both confusing and stressful for all sector participants
- \*The impacts of delays to the patient and overall cost (e.g. GP referrals pilot potential for \$1mill savings)
- \*The degree of frustration and at the same time the willingness to be engaged in the discussion on HTI delivery
- \*The innovations being used to deliver against current performance measures ie overnight UK based reporting on HTI imagery
- \*The different language used throughout process when referring to patients (ie customer, patient, client) and each has differing connotations

## Key themes...





Patient outcomes need to be supported by the contract terms (not determined by it)





Complexity and cost of staying ahead
(or even up with) advances in

technology

The late stage of determination of injury (in grey area cases) creates extra work for all

Normalisation of HTI tech use - both demand and supply side expectations. and "very hard to turn that ship around"

We met... with a number of radiologists and surgeons.
We were amazed to discover... the extent to which
customers now expect an HTI.

We wonder if this means... that patient expectations are being set before enough is known about the patients probable pathway? We met...with a patient and several members of the HTI sector.

We were amazed to discover... there is no clearly defined pathway for patients in need of an HTI.

We wonder if this means... that getting an HTI is unnecessarily stressful for all involved."

We met...with with several surgeons and radiologists.

We were amazed to discover...how new surgical techniques
are so reliant on HTI.

**We wonder if this means...**practitioners will be reluctant to make a diagnosis without one.

We were amazed to discover...that ACC contract requirements can impede good patient outcomes We wonder of this means...ACC are not best placed to determine contract measures

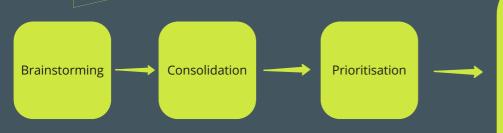


We were amazed to discover...that the delay on injury determination created tension amongst the sector participants

We wonder of this means...we should prioritise clarity of diagnosis the the earliest opportunity



## Ideation...



## Prototyping...



## **Prioritisation criteria for prototypes:**

- \* Patient outcomes focussed
- \* Earliest possible determination for the patient
- \* Best imaging used as early as possible in process to support both diagnosis and determination (where appropriate).
- \*Co-designed performance articulation and best practice





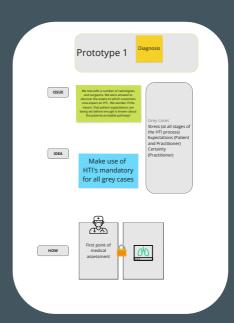
# Prototypes and Recommendations

## Prototype 1

## Prototype 1 was aimed at...

**Grey cases -** those hard to diagnose/ cases. These provide the greatest opportunity for improvement of patient outcomes

- \*Stress (at all stages of the HTI process)
- **\*Expectations** (Patient, Practitioner, Provider and ACC)
- \*Certainty (Patient, Practitioner, Provider and ACC)



## Recommendation 1

## Our recommendation : HTI's become mandatory for all grey cases

"Early diagnosis is the fastest path to definitive care"- Radiologist

## **Key features**

- \*Supports ACC's core focus regarding early return to independence (\* Statement of Intent)
- \*Long run reduction in costs due to reduction in other modes of imagery use, worker compensation payments etc
- \*Quicker diagnosis and determination of treatment, providing certainty for the Patient
- \*Reduction in stress at all stages of the HTI process
- \*Certainty of treatment pathway for Practitioner

## **Assumptions**

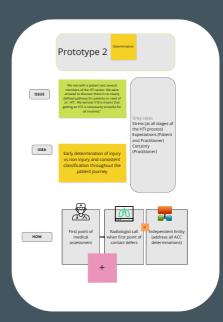
- \*Definition of grey case is where first medical assessor cannot or is not confident of making a diagnosis
- \*Ability to order MRI's (where clinically appropriate), granted to broader first assessor categories
- \*Rollout will be phased (ie extension of GP trials) and has dependency of further training in imagery reading

## Prototype 2

## Prototype 2 was aimed at...

**Grey cases -** those hard to diagnose/ cases. These provide the greatest opportunity for improvement of patient outcomes

- \*Stress (at all stages of the HTI process)
- **\*Expectations** (Patient, Practitioner, Provider and ACC)
- \*Certainty (Patient, Practitioner, Provider and ACC)



## Recommendation 2

#### **Our recommendations:**

- \*Establish an independent service to review HTI imagery (and other relevant information) to determine injury or non-injury causation as early as possible
- \*Once determined that there is a consistent application of the classification throughout the patient journey

"The longer that it (lack of determination) goes on the worse it is for the patient"- Radiologist

## **Key features**

- \*An independent rapid determination service- provided by qualified third party practitioners and funded by ACC
- \*Once determination is made it is funded by ACC ie automatically covered under the HTI contract
- \*Supports ACC's core focus regarding early return to independence (\* Statement of Intent)

### **Assumptions**

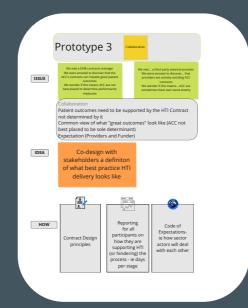
- \*Definition of grey case is where first medical assessor cannot or is not confident of making a determination and requires a specialist opinion
- \*Once a determination is made, it is not challenged
- \*Once determination is made it is funded by ACC.
- \*Reduction in mediation and court costs related to disputed cases

## Prototype 3

## Prototype 3 was aimed at...

#### Sector collaboration

- \*Patient outcomes need to be supported by the HTI Contract not determined by it
- \*Common view of what "great outcomes" look like ACC not best placed to be sole determinant
- \*Common expectations (Providers and Funder)



## Recommendation 3



**Our recommendation:** Engage key stakeholders involved in the broader HTI process (providers, radiologists, DHB procurement officers, surgeons, patient voice) to collaboratively design the new HTI contract.

#### **Contract Design principles**

- \*Collaborative design of performance articulation and best practice
- \*Contract provides for agility, in order to provide the best outcomes for the patient
- \*All participants given equal weighting
- \* Incentivise innovation and continuous improvement, in order to provide the best outcomes for the patient

## **Code of Expectations**

- \*Code of expectations would show how the key 'participants' in the end to end process of HTI provision should act on a day-to-day basis. It reflects the core values, and direction and expectations of each party (including patients).
- \*This would be collaboratively designed.
- \*While there are differing views of the participants, there is a common focus- the health and recovery of the patient

## Reporting and Process Insights

\*Provided to all participants showing how they are supporting HTI (or hindering) the process - ie elapsed days per stage, surgeon wait times, utilisation of equipment, key insights and trends, and impacts on high level patient outcomes.

## **Contract Terms**

\*Term - 3 years with an 18 month reset to account for tech and or procedural innovations (not just price increases)

## **Assumptions**

- \*Collective knowledge of the end to end process and the impact on the patient
- \*Establishment of strategic partnership versus parties to a contract
- \*Active use of current ACC reporting requirements and data

## Recommendation - Measures



#### Our recommendation:

- \*All measurements are aimed at <u>and reviewed against</u> maximising customer centricity, ie enabling the Patients earliest return to (their) normalcy
- \*Retain the current measurements of cost effectiveness, timeliness and reporting requirements and add <u>agility and innovation</u> categories.

"Better and quicker outcomes for the patients, these need to be reflected in the measurements"-DHB Procurement Officer

## **Key features**

- \*Patient outcomes focussed
- \*Collaborative design of contract measures and what success looks like from a contract implementation perspective.
- \*Provides incentives and (degree of) certainty for providers investment in best fit -for-purpose technology and process optimisation

## **Assumption**

\*Collaborative design approach adopted in developing the contract, key measures and code of expectations

# Thank you







## Appendix:

Summary of key insights per role gained through our interviews

Patient/Customer/Client
ACC EPM
GP referral pilot lead
Orthopaedic Surgeon
Radiologist x 2
DHB Procurement Officer

### Key insights from the interviews per role in the end to end process

backlog".

the scan was done

make you feel? "it annoys me own fault. I could have lodged

#### Customer/Patient/Client



to do this, you need to do this" She felt she

GP's can take MRI referrals.

imaging closer to clear things up.

within the process ).Unlike what occurred in other countries

The pilot did change number

of MRI's (they have moved

X location medical workforce concerns . 80% will retire by 2030 (next 9 years) and 45% are British (and trained in London).



pilot due to clinically led initiatives (Led by Doctors). An estimated \$1 million in savings

GP Referral Pilot

Success of the GPSI



What is good is the triaging system. GP's

that are trained in MKS/MRI that looks at referral form to confirm pathway, i some pactices it is a radiologist. "So the quality is high".

One of the successes of the pilot was the amount of time and anxiety that is reduced for patients. "especially the young and those in rural areas".

gained from the GP referral pilot

When people have health problems they want to know and have faith in the person treating them. Treated by the right people with the right treatment options.

Years ago, it was common in rotator cuff to operate on just ultra sound. But now more likely MRI.

Prime purpose is to serve the customer. They need help and his objective is to help them

"for every decade of age there is an extra paragraph of

an MRI report"

Each week his PA goes through all referrals, when a GP has written down, "get MRI" she will highlight this and he checks this before referral. Estimated out of 20 new patients he sees about 20% would have that written.

If he operates on 20 people, 1 of these you "get in there and it looks different" and you need a different pathway. Therefore 1 [5%, although he was guessing numbers/loperation is potentially wasted, unnecessary. Having certainty of appost of surgery and need of surgery should be more efficient in the long run.

He has "smoothed pathway" by quick, responsive report reviewing and communicating to patients (process).

It is now normalised for surgeons to always get a MRI prior to surgery.

> An MRI doesn't determine causation [for ACC eligibility] as changes could imply a recent or long standing issues.

Surgeon

Most patients who have surgery have scan and used for diagnostic purposes.

"physio's and GP's don't tend to have a level of appreciation around what is normal, what is significant". [related to reading MRI reports ]

It is normalised for patients to want an MRI. "MRI is seen as a necessity and a panacea". If doctors/physio's/ or even radiologists mention MRI on any forms used with patients, they expect it.

> The hardest conversation is an MRI is mentioned (somehow)prior to meeting surgeon and the belief system about what is wrong and whether MRI is needed. "Hard to talk down".

Wishes that with HIT reports there was some attachment to give some perspective of frequency of findings against age to indicate to both referring doctor and patient what is normal ie graph of percentage of rotator cuff tears against age He wonders whether ongoing education for the primary carers ordering tests will be adequate. Contingent upon people knowing what they are doing and they need to have continual education for it to be adequate for it to work.

The software that is used now for implants (to make the implants) you need the MRI image detail to input into the software/build of the implant.





"It (GP pilot) wasn't looked at from a whole of system perspective." If they [DHB's]had been involved with PHO's and ACC it could be more efficient. "ACC isn't covering their [dhb's] costs" re: MRI's. "Noise I hear from other DHB's is about funding not [ACC] service".

Role sits in the planning and finance space, "which is unusual as similar roles sit in finance space as to maximise ACC revenue".

There is a huge amount going on with health system and demand is greater the ever. For the non ACC work "we are series to the UK overnight", so using or countries to support demand.

Public costings is all average of averages "so not very accurate". "I want You need to be thinking about whole of patient flow and what are the key measurements, such as time back to work.

"The GP pilot caused abit of angst with PHO's in X location, but it had a better outcome for the patient".

"DHB's are interested in the whole of health and the contracts need to reflect where health is going, not the other way round". **DHB Procurement officer** 



"we try not to do any ACC work where possible in order to manage capacity at the hospitals"

"It is good that we are having this conversation as DHB's in the past haven't been included financial contract negotiations or variations".

When you look at the inputs to provide costings to ACC, "which have all gone up" such as salary costs, and the imported materials (from Aus) for nuclear bone scans (which has gone up from COVID impact) there hasn't been any increase in funding.

"Radiology is costing a lot of money" and given the state of the DHB finances they are looking at all the contracts. "better and quicker outcomes for the patients and these need to be reflected in the measurements"



## Acknowledgements

[1] Smith-Bindman R, Kwan ML, Marlow EC, et al. Trends in Use of Medical Imaging in US Health Care Systems and in Ontario, Canada, 2000-2016. JAMA. 2019;322(9):843–856.

[2]Smith-Bindman, R., Miglioretti, D. L., & Larson, E. B. (2008). Rising use of diagnostic medical imaging in a large integrated health system. Health affairs (Project Hope), 27(6), 1491–1502.

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