

Orthopaedic surgeon joins Affiliated Provider programme in Auckland

Southern Cross' Auckland members now have access to hip and knee replacement surgery through the Affiliated Provider programme, thanks to the addition of orthopaedic surgeon Gary French to the scheme.



Gary French

French is the first Auckland orthopaedic surgeon to join the programme, in a move warmly welcomed by Southern Cross.

For French, the trigger to join was the current economic climate. "I've always believed it's important to provide a cost-effective service and that's never been more important than in the past couple of years. Few people have a lot of spare money these days.

"When I read about the benefits of the Affiliated Provider programme for patients in a recent Southern Cross mail-out, I decided to approach Southern Cross about joining up. I liked the idea of providing a more affordable service for patients without reducing the quality of the service they receive.

"Many of my older patients seeking hip and knee replacement surgery have policies where they pay a portion of the treatment costs. The amount they'll need to contribute through the Affiliated Provider contract is less than it would otherwise cost them. For people on 'budget plans' with excesses, Southern Cross even waives the excess that typically applies, which is a significant advantage for the patient.

French says he's aware of some providers' concerns about joining the Southern Cross Affiliated Provider programme, but he doesn't share those concerns.

"It's apparent in the Auckland orthopaedic field that there is a significant range of fees charged by different providers for similar procedures, without an apparent reason for the difference. I can see why a health insurer would want to try to achieve more consistency and certainty in what they're charged.

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"Some surgeons may be fearful that in agreeing to a contracted price they may be heading towards the United States model of managed care but I don't share those fears. I've always had a good relationship with Southern Cross and I think it's vital that private surgery remains affordable, especially big-ticket items like hip and knee replacements."

French commenced hip and knee replacement surgery under his Affiliated Provider contract in mid November through Ormiston Hospital in Botany, where his private practice has been based since the middle of 2009.

A consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Middlemore Hospital since 1994, French's private practice has grown from a half day per fortnight in the mid 90s to about 70 per cent of his time today. Between his public and private roles he performs up to 125 hip replacements and 125 knee replacements a year, along with a range of other knee and ankle procedures and musculoskeletal tumour (orthopaedic oncology) surgery.

French's private practice caters predominantly for patients from central, east and south Auckland, but some patients are referred from as far afield as Whangarei and Taupo. He's a big fan of the modern, well-appointed, facilities at Ormiston and the experienced and professional staff there who ensure the "flow of the hospital is great!".

Gary French's contact details can be found in the online Affiliated Provider directory at www.southerncross.co.nz/affiliatedprovider or at his own website www.ormistonortho.co.nz



Gary French and Johanna who schedules his appointments