

Timeliness of X-ray following hand injury 17HDC01170, 26 February 2019

Department of Corrections ~ Fracture ~ Assessment ~ X-ray ~ Right 4(1)

Immediately prior to his imprisonment, a man sustained an injury to the ring finger of his right hand. The man was assessed by a registered nurse later that day when he arrived at the prison. He was not reviewed by a medical officer until 32 days later. An X-ray of the man's hand was requested at this review but it was not scheduled until 27 days after the assessment, and two months after the original injury occurred.

The man reinjured his finger, and an X-ray was taken that day. The man had surgery to correct a malunion of his fractured finger.

Findings

It was held that the Department of Corrections (Corrections) had the ultimate responsibility for the delivery of services to the man. It was considered that the following aspects of the man's care were particularly concerning:

- The delay in medical officer review;
- The process of obtaining an X-ray;
- The delay in definitive treatment; and
- The failure to provide follow-up care after the man's surgical procedure.

Accordingly, it was found that Corrections failed to provide services with reasonable care and skill and breached Right 4(1).

Recommendations

It was recommended that Corrections apologise to the man; provide training to its registered nurses on the management of acute injuries; review and update its policies and procedures on the management of acute injuries; review its policies and procedures relating to the recall process to ensure continuity and timeliness of care; and conduct an audit of the standard of its clinical documentation, including the Health Services Health Care Pathway. Corrections confirmed that it had met or would meet these recommendations.