



# Faculty of Public Health

Of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

**OSPHE 064**

## **Low Day Case Surgery Rates**

## Low Day Case Surgery Rates

# CANDIDATE PACK

## Candidate task

You are a member of the Public Health Team who have been asked to advise on how you would approach the investigation of the finding of low day case surgery<sup>1</sup> rates in your local surgical unit. You have to brief a health service manager responsible for leading the commissioning function in your commissioning organisation.

You have 8 minutes to prepare for the station. You are not required to prepare any visual aids. You will then spend 4 minutes giving a verbal presentation and there will then be 4 minutes of discussion with the role-player. You may use paper notes to aid your verbal briefing.

## Outline of situation

You are working in a public health department which provides support to a team who commission. A report on day case surgery rates was published yesterday by the government health department (the data are in the briefing pack).

The manager responsible for leading commissioning in your organisation has emailed you the report and asked to see you. The manager has indicated that they are very concerned about the data and needs your advice as they are new to your organisation. The hospital in question has a projected deficit of 20million pounds this year.

The manager has also booked a call with the Executive Director of the Hospital concerned whose responsibilities include surgery and day case activity, and will want your advice on what to say when he/she speaks to him/her after seeing you.

## Candidate guidance

Consider what approach you will take to investigating the findings, what possible explanations may exist for the findings, and how you are going to proceed. Pay particular attention to being clear and concise in your report to the commissioning manager and cover these three areas:

- What possible explanations may lie behind this sort of finding?
- What you advise is done next.
- What, at this early stage, should be said to the hospital?

<sup>1</sup>'Day case surgery' is surgery completed without the need for an overnight hospital stay. It is usually less costly and many patients prefer it. It is also healthcare policy to increase rates of day case surgery in the English health care system.

## **At the station**

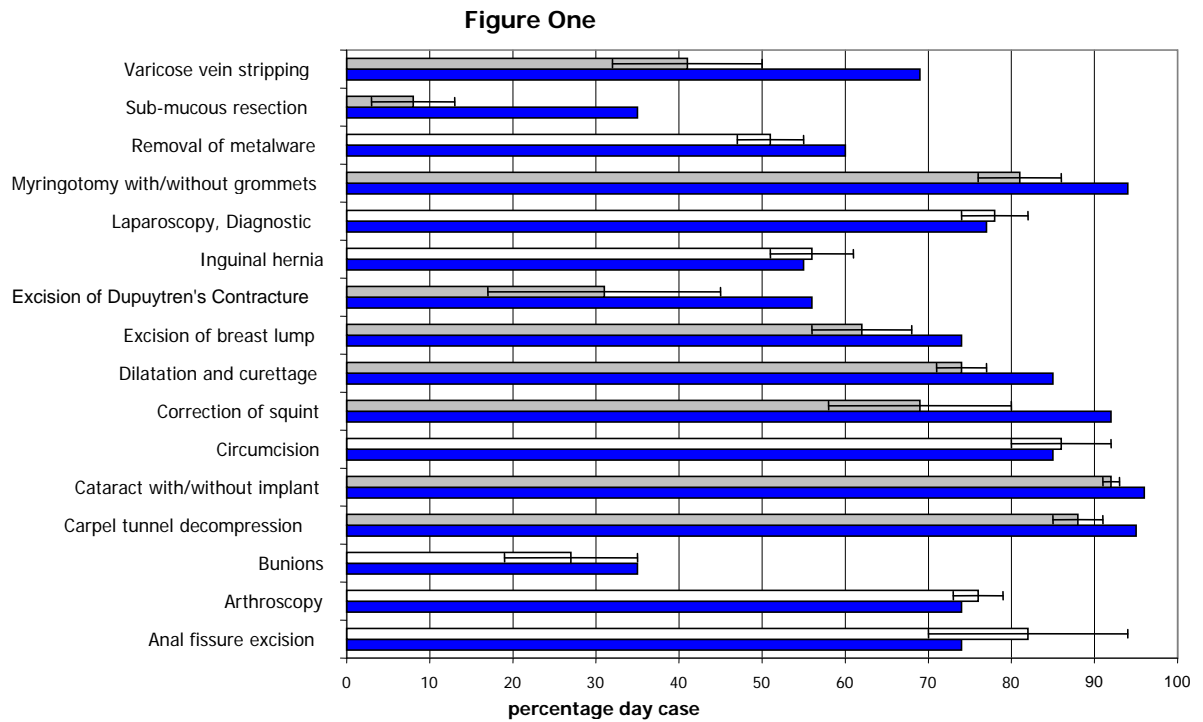
You will be greeted by a marker examiner who will take your candidate number and name, and then hand over to the actor by saying:

“This is the health service manager. They will now start the station.”

# Candidate Briefing Pack

## Figure One

Shows rates of day-case surgery as a proportion of all surgery for a range of selected surgical procedures for your organisation when compared with national benchmarking data.



**LEGEND:** DARK GREY= National upper quartile, WHITE= local data at upper quartile LIGHT GREY= local data below upper quartile

Adapted from [www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/organisationpolicy/secondarycare/daysurgery](http://www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/organisationpolicy/secondarycare/daysurgery)

## Low Day Case Surgery Rates

# **MAIN MARKER EXAMINER PACK**

**Examiner situation**

You will greet the candidate and record their candidate number and name and then hand over to the actor by saying:

“This is the health service manager. They will now start the station”.

**Examiner Answer guidance**

The candidate should be able to identify and communicate the basic statistical and interpretive aspects of this station, as listed in the marking guidance. They should provide this in language appropriate to the manager, and provide sufficient guidance to allow the manager to discuss subsequent action with the surgery unit.

**Examiner briefing pack (these will be inserted by the Faculty office)**

Candidate pack, Role-player briefing pack.

## Marking Guide for Examiners

1. Has the candidate appropriately demonstrated presenting skills in a typical public health setting (presenting to a person or audience)?

The candidate summarises clearly and with emphasis on key points, avoiding jargon and makes eye contact and appropriate non-verbal communication.

2. Has the candidate appropriately demonstrated listening skills in a typical public health setting (listening and responding appropriately)?

Candidate responds appropriately to the questioning of the role-player and understands questions – and asks if unclear.

3. Has the candidate demonstrated ascertainment of key public health facts from the material provided and used it appropriately?

Percentages of day cases are low across a number of procedures, though good in others. However, even the data for low percentages only tell us that the proportion is below the upper quartile – it may still be above the national average. Many procedures are not that effective anyway. Data does not directly show the actual number of procedures, only the proportion done as day case. Good candidates might note that quartiles does not tell you about skewness of distribution (may be small difference), and that you can infer numbers of procedures from size of confidence intervals. From what has been presented it would require more work to establish what financial savings might be made from increasing day case rates in the hospital.

4. Has the candidate given a balanced view and/or explained appropriately key public health concepts in a public health setting?

Explanations: Basic data error, Random fluctuation (small numbers and confidence intervals), skewness of distribution, relationship to socio-economic factors (deprivation, literacy, age and infirmity), complication rates/clinical governance issues related to day case surgery? Structural factors (logistics) influence ability to do day case surgery.

Day surgery is not the only important outcome measure, need time trends to assess if this is a new or enduring issue. Day case surgery is less costly and the trust has a deficit.

Some reference to how the data might be used with clinicians as part of an approach to changing clinical behaviour.

5. Has the candidate demonstrated sensitivity in handling uncertainty, the unexpected, conflict and/or responding to challenging questions?

Verify data. Candidates should identify that the explanations to the presented findings may be multi-factorial, and that the finding itself needs to be established as factually correct before any conclusions or definitive action can be taken. Demonstrates that conflict or misunderstanding with unit surgeons is likely if inappropriate premature comments made by commissioning manager in more public settings or to the media. Need to work collaboratively with surgeons and trust senior team.

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# **ROLE-PLAYER BRIEFING PACK**

## Station background

As candidate briefing.

## Role Play Brief

You are a senior commissioning manager in the organisation, responsible for commissioning activity worth tens of millions of pounds. The hospital that the data refer to is overspent, and switching surgical activity (appropriate case-mix) to day case from in-patient would allow more work to be done for less cost. This chart suggests that there is room for further improvement in the hospital.

However, some procedures (such as “routine” varicose vein surgery) are increasingly not well supported by evidence of clinical effectiveness (so although day cases would be less costly, it may be better to focus on simply doing less work).

You are not sure you really understand the chart and don’t have a background in statistics – but the number of areas in which the results are below the upper quartile and don’t look good. You are looking for help to get your head around the data, and work out what you need to do next.

You should start the station by saying:

**“Thanks for freeing up the time to come and discuss this. Clearly I am worried as the unit’s performance looks poor. I have booked a phone call to the unit manager – but I need to ensure I know what this data means and what we would want to do as a result.”**

## Any ‘No Go’ areas

None.

## Level of conflict

Low to medium. You are looking for help in raising this constructively with the trust. However, if you don’t get help from the candidate you should press the candidate to identify next steps that could help you.