

# Thirteen thousand hospital operations cancelled in Wales

By Joan Smith  
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Over the last three years, 13,000 hospital operations have been cancelled in the hospital boards across Wales. More than 9,000 of these are down to bed shortages.

The number of operations cancelled due to lack of staff rose from 1,125 to 1,628 over the same period.

The Welsh government is trying to wash its hands of any responsibility by saying that a high proportion of cancellations are done by patients themselves and sometimes it will be necessary for a hospital to cancel an operation for justifiable and professional clinical reasons. In fact a majority of these cancellations have caused by the erosion of NHS services in Wales due to slashing of funds.

A Welsh government spokesman hypocritically said, "We are committed to reducing the number of cancelled operations across Wales."

But one should explain how cutting £660 million by the Labour-led administration in Wales over the last three years could help to reduce the number of cancellations.

There has been a 72 percent increase in cancellations due to bed shortages since 2010/2011, with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's cancellations almost hitting 4,500.

According to one source, Labour led governments have cut down more than 2,000 beds in Wales over the last decade.

These attacks on NHS carried out by the Welsh administration, in line with their Conservative and Liberal Democrat counterparts in Westminster, are aimed at dismantling NHS services and privatising them. They are not only creating problems in surgical interventions but also having a critical impact on services across the board.

Eleven percent of patients admitted to Accident and

Emergency care facilities in Wales have not been treated, admitted to wards or discharged less than a four hour period despite the UK legislation stipulates that 95 percent should be.

After visiting the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, one of the largest in Wales, a panel of professionals of the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) described the situation:

"The Accident and Emergency (A&E) department was failing to cope with the constant influx of patients. This is an infrastructure failure. For instance there are only three resuscitation bays and patients are often stacked up in corridors and ambulances. There are staffing issues in terms of a timely attending to patients."

The RCS revealed that due to long waiting lists many patients had deteriorated or died before reaching surgery. The report showed that due to the gutting of NHS services, cheaper and less effective methods had been used to treat patients in place of surgery and that beds have been closed in order to save money.

Correspondence between the RCS and the Health inspectorate of Wales revealed that 152 patients had died in the last five years while waiting for heart surgery. Those who need heart surgery are meant to be treated within 26 weeks.

NHS Executive David Sissling insisted that the bed shortages were down to "unprecedented pressures" during the winter months. He was responding to a Wales Audit Office report that said that health boards had taken unsustainable measures to meet their financial targets.

A report by the Auditor General last week highlighted the deterioration of A&E services across Wales caused by the backlog of patients in hospitals. Many patients, especially elderly, are left waiting in

A&E for up to 12 hours.

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