



European cataract surgeons close day case gap

European ophthalmologists are closing the gap between themselves and colleagues in other developed countries in performing day case cataract surgery.

New statistics from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – the Paris-based government think tank – show that the day case rate for cataract surgery in four European countries exceeds 90%, a rate comparable to those in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The four countries – Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom – reported day case cataract surgery rates

of 94.1% 94.3%, 94% and 90.9%, respectively, in 2003.

By comparison, the latest OECD figures for Australia show that ophthalmologists there performed 89.5% of cataract surgery as day cases; Canada reported a day case rate of 98.9%, and New Zealand reported a day case rate of 90.8%.

A glance at the OECD statistics indicates that European ophthalmologists in those four countries and throughout the rest of Europe have made great strides over the past decade in performing more cataract surgery as day cases.

For example, in 1993, UK ophthalmologists performed one-in-five

cataract operations on outpatients. In that same year, Finnish ophthalmologists performed one-in-seven of their cataract operations on outpatients. By 1995, UK ophthalmologists were performing two-of-five cataract operations on outpatients; Finnish ophthalmologists were performing one-in-three cataract operations on outpatients.

Although the rates of outpatient cataract surgery continued to grow in Europe through the 1990s, ophthalmologists in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia began outpacing most of their European colleagues. By 2000, the rates of day case

cataract surgery had reached 98.5% in Canada, 89.5% in New Zealand, and 84.1% in Australia.

In Europe in 2000, the only country to rival those three nations was Norway, which reported a day case cataract surgery rate of 87.3%.

The rates for all other European nations were significantly lower in 2000, at 82.8% in the Netherlands, 82.4% in the U.K., 81.6% in Finland, 80.3% in Denmark, 71.2% in Belgium, 37.6% in Italy, 31.7% in France, 29.3% in Luxembourg, 28.8% in Ireland, and 9.1% in Portugal.

Ophthalmologists outpace other specialists in outpatient care

Across Europe, cataract surgeons continue to outpace physicians in other specialties in performing day case surgery.

Statistics from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development show that the day case rates for cataract surgery surpass the overall rate of day surgery in virtually every European county.

In 2003, the percentage of cataract operations carried out as day case procedures was far higher than the percentage of all operations carried out as day cases in every country that reported its statistics to the OECD.

The highest cataract day surgery rate in Europe in 2003 – 94.3% in Finland – was almost twice the rate of the best overall rate for all day surgery – 53.0% in the United Kingdom.

Overall, the average rate for day case cataract surgery in 2003 for the nine European countries that reported their statistics to the OECD – Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands Portugal, Switzerland, and the U.K – varied from Finland's high of 94.3% to Luxembourg's low of 33.7%.

By contrast, the overall average national day case rate for those same nine countries ranged from the UK's high of 53% to Portugal's low of 12.6%.

Only in Luxembourg did the average overall rate of outpatient surgery – of 39.4% – exceed the rate of outpatient cataract surgery.

The overall rate of outpatient cataract surgery for 2003 for the four top-performing countries – Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and the UK – was more than 90%. That rate compared to an overall rate of all outpatient surgery of less than 50% in those four nations.

In a number of countries the rate of day case cataract surgery was more than three times that of the overall national day case average. The clearest different was in Portugal, where the rate of outpatient cataract surgery was more than three times that of the overall day case rate. In 2003, Portuguese ophthalmologists performed 43.6% of cataract operations on outpatients; in that same year, all Portuguese surgeons performed only 12.6% of operations on outpatients.

Among those countries reporting comparable statistics to the OECD, only Ireland reported a lower outpatient cataract surgery rate – of 43.4% – than the overall national outpatient surgery average – of 45.5%.

Rates of cataract surgery continue to rise

For the most part, the rate of cataract surgery in Europe is continuing to rise, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Eight of ten European nations that reported statistics to the Paris-based government think tank reported increases in the number of cataract operations performed per 100,000 of population between 2002 and 2003.

In particular, the rate of cataract surgery between 2002 and 2003 increased in:

- Finland by 4.8%;
- Hungary by 3.2%;
- Ireland by 4.9%;
- Luxembourg by 1%;
- The Netherlands by 5.9%;
- Portugal by 19.8%;
- Switzerland by 8.9%;
- United Kingdom by 7.9%.

Only in Denmark and Italy did the rates of cataract surgery fall in 2003 from 2002.

The rate in Denmark fell slightly by 1.4% to 497.9 operations per 100,000 in 2003 from its all-time high of 505 operations per 100,000 in 2002.

The rate in Italy also fell from its all-time high – of 795.3 operations per 100,000 in 2002 – to a rate of 756.9 operations per 100,000 in 2003, a drop of 4.8%.

The 2002-2003 gains came on top of huge gains made by European countries over the last decade.

For instance, the rate of cataract surgery, since 1993 has:

- more than tripled in Portugal;
- more than doubled in Finland and the UK.

Of the 10 European countries with OECD statistics from 2003, Luxembourg reported the highest rate of surgery – 774.1 operations per 100,000 of population. That figure, however, pales in comparison to the rate of cataract surgery recorded in Belgium as late as 2001 – 1,373 operations per 100,000 of population. Belgium has not reported any more recent statistics to the OECD.

Of those countries who reported statistics to the OECD for 2003, Hungary was not far behind Luxembourg, with a rate of 768.9 operations per 100,000 of population. Finland was third at 758.1 operations per 100,000; Italy was fourth at 756.9 operations per 100,000.

With the exception of Belgium, most European countries that reported to the OECD still lag behind Canadian surgery rates. In 2001, the latest year for which statistics were available from Canada, ophthalmologists there performed 1,373 cataract operations for every 100,000 persons.

On the bottom of the OECD list is New Zealand, with a rate of 190.2 cataract operations per 100,000 of population in 2003.

By 2002, the tide began to turn when Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands reported day case cataract surgery rates of greater than 90% for the first time. All other European countries that reported their statistics to the OECD also reported significant gains in the rates of day case cataract surgery. For example, the rates of day case cataract surgery for 2002 rose to 36.3% in Ireland, 62.1% in Italy, 30.8% in Luxembourg, 88.3% in Norway, and 34.7% in Portugal.

More comprehensive comparisons of day case cataract surgery rates over the past decade are unavailable because a number of OECD countries – including Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Poland, Slovak republic, Spain, Turkey, and the United States – have never reported their day case cataract surgery statistics to the OECD.

Cataract surgery most common outpatient surgery

The OECD figures also showed that cataract surgery is more commonly performed as a day case than are four other common operations.

Among the seven nations that reported statistics about outpatient surgery for: ligation and varicose vein removal; inguinal and femoral hernia repair, tonsillectomy, and laparoscopic cholecystectomy, outpatient cataract surgery was many times more common.

In general, those European countries with the highest rates of day case cataract surgery were the countries with the highest rates of day surgery for the other four operations tracked by the OECD.

For example, Finland and the Netherlands, which posted some of Europe's highest rates of day case cataract surgery in 2003, also posted some of Europe's highest rates of day case surgery for the four procedures tracked by the OECD.

In Finland, where ophthalmic surgeons performed cataract operations on outpatients in 94.3% of cases, surgeons in other specialties performed outpatient surgery in:

- 62.8% of ligation and varicose vein stripping operations;
- 10.0% of laparoscopic cholecystectomies;
- 47.5% of femoral inguinal and femoral hernia repairs;
- 31.7% of tonsillectomies.

In the Netherlands, where ophthalmic surgeons performed cataract operations on outpatients in 94.0% of cases, surgeons in other specialties performed outpatient surgery in:

- 68.8% of ligation and varicose vein stripping operations;
- 2.4% of laparoscopic cholecystectomies;
- 39.5% of femoral inguinal and femoral hernia repairs;
- 77.7% of tonsillectomies.

The OECD statistics also revealed that those European countries with the lowest rates of cataract surgery were among the countries with the lowest rates of day surgery for the four other operations.

For example, Ireland and Portugal, which posted some of Europe's lowest rates of day case cataract surgery in 2003, also posted some of Europe's lowest rates for day case surgery for the four other procedures.

In Ireland, where ophthalmic surgeons performed cataract operations on outpatients in 43.4% of cases, surgeons in other specialties performed outpatient surgery in:

- 36.2% of ligation and varicose vein stripping operations;
- 2.5% of laparoscopic cholecystectomies;
- 23.5% of femoral inguinal and femoral hernia repairs;
- 0.4% of tonsillectomies.

In Portugal, where ophthalmic surgeons performed cataract operations on outpatients in 43.6% of cases, surgeons in other specialties performed outpatient surgery in:

- 10.4% of ligation and varicose vein stripping operations;
- 1.2% of laparoscopic cholecystectomies;
- 13.8% of femoral inguinal and femoral hernia repairs;
- 8.2% of tonsillectomies.

Percentage of all operations performed as day cases 1993-2003

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Australia	-	30.2	32.3	34.1	35.7	41.9	44.1	43.5	44.4	45.4	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	33.5	35.1	36.9	-	-
Canada	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62.3	65.0	-
Denmark	-	-	-	38.6	41.4	42.4	43.8	45.4	46.8	51.0	52.6
Finland	-	12.4	20.8	25.7	28.7	30.5	33.2	34.6	35.4	37.4	37.8
Iceland	-	-	-	-	-	12.8	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	-	-	38.8	41.5	41.8	42.4	41.2	40.9	42.0	44.5	45.5
Italy	-	-	-	6.7	10.6	14.8	17.3	20.8	24.2	28.7	32.9
Luxembourg	-	-	-	43.4	40.4	40.6	40.4	39.9	39.5	39.4	39.4
Mexico	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.7	20.6	20.5	17.9
Netherlands	34.7	36.6	38.7	40.5	41.7	44.0	45.1	46.3	48.0	49.5	47.3
New Zealand	-	-	-	-	34.1	35.9	37.4	37.5	37.5	35.7	35.8
Portugal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.4	7.0	10.4	12.6
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17.6	18.5
UK	39.1	42.2	44.8	46.8	47.7	50.4	51.7	52.5	52.7	53.1	53.0

Percentage of cataract operations performed as day cases 1993-2003

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Australia	-	-	-	-	-	76.8	80.3	84.1	87.1	89.5	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	64.5	71.2	76.3	-	-
Canada	-	-	-	-	-	-	98.1	98.5	98.9	-	-
Denmark	-	-	-	63.0	68.5	71.7	78.0	80.3	82.2	92.2	94.1
Finland	14.7	20.7	33.3	42.4	58.7	67.0	74.7	81.6	86.9	92.0	94.3
France	9.8	-	-	-	18.9	22.8	27.4	31.7	35.8	-	-
Iceland	-	-	-	-	-	79.0	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	-	-	10.9	15.1	20.7	21.1	27.8	28.8	33.3	36.3	43.4
Italy	-	-	-	5.7	9.4	17.7	27.0	37.6	47.1	62.1	73.7
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-	-	27.8	29.3	28.0	30.8	33.7
Mexico	-	-	90.6	84.6	83.2	81.9	79.8	81.1	68.1	68.1	68.7
Netherlands	-	-	29.7	41.8	54.8	65.4	74.8	82.8	89.1	92.5	94.0
New Zealand	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89.5	89.2	90.9	90.8
Norway	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	87.3	86.7	88.3	-
Portugal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.1	30.9	34.7	43.6
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	82.3	-
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	52.7	62.0
UK	20.2	31.1	42.0	52.6	65.5	72.2	77.2	82.4	85.7	88.6	90.9

Number of cataract operations performed per 100,000 of population 1993-2003

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Australia	-	-	-	-	-	896.5	667.9	712.3	752.7	797.6	-
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	1151.3	1247.7	1368.9	-	-
Canada	-	-	-	-	-	-	1370.1	1440.3	1373.0	-	-
Denmark	-	-	-	358.2	363.5	381.8	427.0	426.8	445.1	505.5	497.9
Finland	372.8	441.6	457.3	536.8	589.5	620.9	650.0	638.9	582.9	723.3	758.1
France	430.3	-	-	-	625.3	656.5	683.5	729.6	754.5	-	-
Greece	-	-	-	311.5	346.4	399.0	504.7	560.5	-	-	-
Hungary	-	-	-	-	-	-	669.5	698.7	723.6	745.1	768.9
Iceland	-	-	-	-	-	259.1	-	-	-	566.6	-
Ireland	-	-	354.2	364.5	361.2	363.6	366.0	446.2	485.2	441.9	463.6
Italy	-	-	-	360.1	435.7	513.4	586.9	669.3	747.0	795.3	756.9
Korea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	315.8	-
Luxembourg	-	-	-	591.5	624.6	748.3	669.3	715.8	730.9	766.1	774.1
Mexico	-	-	26.0	31.7	33.8	35.8	38.5	37.3	44.0	47.3	48.4
Netherlands	-	-	390.3	423.6	464.5	491.9	524.6	553.3	595.2	656.4	694.8
New Zealand	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	243.9	219.5	200.5	190.2
Norway	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	514.2	507.4	474.5	-
Portugal	83.0	93.6	97.8	106.0	114.5	111.7	140.7	145.6	195.9	221.3	265.2
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	851.5	-
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	476.7	518.9
UK	270.6	318.2	335.7	331.9	401.9	473.8	489.0	540.0	566.9	594.5	641.3