

Clinical : Community Sexual Health  
Proactive Release : 08 February 2019



21 January 2019

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### Official Information Act (1982) Request

I write in response to your Official Information Act request, received by us on 03 December 2018. You requested the following information:

- **The number of sexually transmitted disease screening checks conducted by the DHB, each year for the last five years.**
- **The number of positive tests results for each sexually transmitted disease, each year for the last five years.**
- **The cost of conducting a sexually transmitted disease screening check and a break down of those costs.**

We do not hold this information at a District Health Board district-wide level, in a manner that can accurately answer your specific questions. We note the following information, which we hope is useful context for you on this matter.

Any available DHB data will only be at a very general description of 'sexual health labs' requests completed and does not include meaningful information in a way that can be extracted, details of those requests, such as to whether the request relates to Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Screening (of asymptomatic people), or diagnostic work, or the number of positive results for specific STI's that are identified. Similarly, for the costs/ funding incurred in the processes of STI testing, these vary depending on the context of the testing.

We note that the Ministry of Health funds the ESR (the Institute of Environmental Science and Research) to provide specialist surveillance on a number of diagnosed conditions and public health issues. Their work and available reports will be more representative the work occurring nationally in this aspect of New Zealand public health.

- <https://surv.esr.cri.nz/surveillance/surveillance.php>

We recommend reviewing that available information, and contacting them if you require further information on this topic.

As further context for the metro-Auckland area, there is a regional sexual health service, which provides clinics in our district; however provision of similar activity does also occur in other services.

Our primary health care team indicates that STI screening is delivered in a large variety of places, including at specialist DHB sexual health clinics, other specialist services (such as Women's Health), in General Practices - as a part of first level services for enrolled populations, and as part of family planning, school-based clinics, and antenatal care. This variety of delivery also results in variable costs/eligibility criteria across the region.

We note that an STI Screen is used for identification of a range of diseases; and a clinician can request as a part of an individual screen any number of these; and for good clinical reasons may not include all of them. Clinically, we consider that if the person has any symptoms, then the tests are not a screening. This means that STI screenings can be difficult to differentiate at an aggregated data level.

Regarding the outcomes of STI tests, positive results can occur for a variable amount of time post-infection and/or treatment, and doesn't necessarily mean an active infection (e.g. syphilis testing is for antibodies and chlamydia tests for DNA, which can be there post- treatment).

The price paid by health providers for processing of laboratory tests is commercially sensitive, as part of contracts with Laboratory providers, and would be withheld on that basis. The costs of tests involved will be met by a variety of funders, including via user co-payments for General Practice visits, via DHB-funded services, or by PHO subsidy of costs for GPs to enable targeting for some health users. All visits to Sexual Health Services in New Zealand are provided 'free to patient' for STI screens, and will also provide free or subsidised treatment and follow-up. Some PHOs choose to provide free services to partners of patients who tested positive for an STI. Lead Maternity Carers (LMC) may complete testing as part of pregnancy checks, and LMC care is funded directly by the Ministry of Health.

I trust this information satisfactorily answers your query. If you are not satisfied with this response you are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau DHB website.

Yours sincerely,



Fepulea'i Margie Apa  
**Chief Executive**