

Human Resources: Harm to Staff  
Proactive Publish: 20 July 2018



25 June 2018

[REDACTED]  
Reporter  
Taranaki Daily News | Stuff  
PO Box 444,  
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E-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

#### **Official Information Act (1982) Request**

I write in response to your Official Information Act request, dated 31 May 2018. You requested the following information:

#### **The number of assaults of hospital staff by patients reported to the DHB over the last five years.**

- **If this could please be broken down into number of cases each year for 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017.**
- **The number of these assaults that were then reported to the police.**
- **The types of assaults these were. These do not need to be broken down into how many of each, but just a list of the types of assault.**

For context, Counties Manukau Health Services provide health services to more than 540,000 people residing in South Auckland, both in hospitals and community settings. Obviously, many of these people are acutely unwell and / or in distress when they require care and that can result in inappropriate behaviours being exhibited, which many of our staff members need to manage and respond to.

We employ over 7,000 staff and are constantly working to create a safe work environment for all of them. We are clear that we have zero tolerance for any inappropriate behaviour toward our staff, and encourage the reporting of all such incidents so that they can be fully investigated.

The data source for all patient-related incidents of this nature at CM Health facilities is the Incident Reporting System (IRS). In the system, there are separate coding classifications for assaults being Physical - such as hitting, touching, grabbing; Verbal/ gestures; and Sexual conduct), as well as for inappropriate behaviours. The data we are providing is derived from staff self-selection of incident codes, and may not reflect a consistent severity of incidents.

We note that information of this nature should be interpreted with caution. Given the differences in incident reporting systems, staff reporting and category selection, and also differences in DHB sizes and services, comparisons between various DHBs may be misleading.

Please refer to **Table 1** for the total numbers per year.

Sum of Count of File	Incident Year						
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 YTD	Grand Total
Person Classification							
COMMUNITY CLIENT	5	12	11	4	12	3	47
IN-PATIENT	135	144	108	132	73	38	630
OUT-PATIENT	2	2	6	3	2	3	18
Grand Total	142	158	125	139	87	44	695

**Table 1**

It is difficult for us to retrospectively and accurately identify the number of times the NZ Police were called to assist or intervene in any incident from the available data. This is because an incident report is completed immediately, and in some cases the decision to involve NZ Police may be a subsequent one. There have been cases where NZ Police follow-up occur sometime after an incident. In addition, there are situations where patients independently contact NZ Police.

Our frontline services do work closely with Police regarding issues on premises; however, these situations are not always recorded as an incident. If appropriate, we support individuals who need to work with the Police as they pursue investigations.

We accept that employees across all our services do at times experience and tell us of incidents of inappropriate behaviour by patients towards them. We actively encourage staff to report all types of incidents that occur, and to seek support in dealing with these, both at the time and if they feel this is affecting them subsequently. We also provide staff with opportunities for professional training to learn risk assessment, de-escalation and effective communication techniques that aim to reduce the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviours, and the adverse impacts that can result. We see any increase in reported incidents as part of wider improvements in acknowledging and dealing with exposure to this type of behaviour in the workplace.

Irrespective, every incident that is reported is automatically notified to the appropriate manager for investigation and follow-up. Employees will be offered further support, including counselling and access to the funded Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if appropriate.

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,

Gloria Johnson  
**Chief Executive (Acting)**