

Public Health : measles response  
Proactive Release: 28 November 2019



21<sup>st</sup> November 2019

9(2)(a)

Email: 9(2)(a)

Dear 9(2)(a)

### Official Information Act (1982) Request

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us on 1 November 2019, via transfer from the Department of Internal Affairs under Section 14 of the Act. You requested the following information:

**I wish to know the immunisation status (names redacted of course) of these medical/ DHB staff mentioned as having contracted measles.**

*I note, "At least 20 DHB staff have had measles this year – and at least six of them caught it on the job. Eloise Gibson reports." <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2019/10/31/886805/hospital-staff-catching-measles-on-the-job#>*

- 1. How many of these and wider cases of DHB / staff who contracted measles, were vaccinated?**
  - **How many shots did they receive?**
  - **How close after vaccines did they contract the measles.**

As context for this response, Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people), as well as regional and supra regional specialist services (Burns, Plastics and Orthopaedics). Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient/ ambulatory and community-based models of care. We employ more than 7,500 staff, and see more than 118,000 presentations at the Middlemore Hospital Emergency Department each year.

As a consequence of delivering these services, each day many of our employees come into contact with a wide-cross section of the community, who are unwell and require health care. This increases the chances for them to be exposed to a range of infectious and transmittable illnesses, particularly given the number of current measles cases in our community, but also for other seasonal illnesses.

The current measles outbreak has seen the largest number of cases in New Zealand occurring in the Counties Manukau district. We proactively support our staff to protect themselves, and our community from the risk of all infectious and vaccine-preventable illnesses. We use pre-employment

screening to confirm immunity status, and also routinely offer (at no cost) seasonal influenza and scheduled vaccinations to staff.

Our responses to your questions are below:

1. **How many of these and wider cases of DHB / staff who contracted measles, were vaccinated?**
  - **How many shots did they receive?**
  - **How close after vaccines did they contract the measles.**

There have been seven health workers (including two students) at Counties Manukau Health who contracted measles this year.

We note that measles is a notifiable illness, for which cases in New Zealand are reported under the Health Act. DHB employees are treated the same as other New Zealanders, including the management during the illness, and any relevant public health screening or contact tracing process. Due to the high prevalence of measles cases in the Counties Manukau community at this time, it remains difficult to confirm where these workers contracted measles.

Of the affected employees, three were back-office employees, who had no face-to-face contact with patients, and four (including 2 students) worked on the frontline.

The detail of individual immunity/ vaccination status is private health information, which is provided confidentially, and only held in individual employee files. We believe that disclosing further information regarding individual vaccination status would unduly intrude on these employees privacy. In all cases, these employees were stood-down from work when the measles rash was identified. Cases of measles can occur in a small proportion of people who are vaccinated.

We do not believe the importance of knowing the details of each individual's specific vaccination status outweighs the importance of protecting their privacy.

Therefore, we are declining the remainder of your request under Section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons.

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 Officer  
**Counties Manukau Health**