

Clinical: Surgical Services & CSSD  
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21 May 2020

9(2)(a)

E-mail: 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 16 March 2020. You requested the following information:

- **I would like a detailed breakdown of any, and all incidents relating to equipment not being properly sterilised by the District Health Board from March 2019.**
  - **Please clarify if the lack of sterilisation was picked up before, or after patient exposure.**
- **And I ask that anything within the spirit of this request that is not mentioned be included in the response.**

For context, CM Health Services provide health and support services to more than 569,400 people residing in South Auckland, both in hospitals and community settings, along with some regional and supra-regional specialist services (Burns, Plastics and Orthopaedics). Some clinical services are provided to our Counties Manukau community by other DHBs for the entire Auckland region. 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.

This response is for Counties Manukau District Health Board (CMDHB), and our CM Health Central Sterilisation Services Departments (CSSD).

Sterilisation is the process that renders a material sterile, defined as containing no viable infectious agent and is usually achieved by chemical, thermal or irradiation techniques. We are confident our current processes, in line with AS/NZS 4187:2014 – *Standards for reprocessing of reusable medical devices in health service organisations*, are robust and safe.

The number of incidents should be considered in the context of the number of surgical packs processed (sterilised) at CM Health per year. On average, more than 30,500 equipment sets are processed per month.

We have robust checking processes in place before a surgery commences in all the CSSD services and in each operating theatre to identify any equipment set processing breaches. We expect all staff to complete Incident Forms when sterile items are identified as compromised, so that this is investigated and improvement processes can be completed.

We have used our Incident Reporting system to provide the following summary details. We are aware that we provided a response on these same questions in March 2019. Care should be taken before comparing results, as different data extraction parameters may have been applied.

**Number of incidents relating to a breach of equipment sterilisation processes at CM Health sites within Sterilisation Services (Middlemore Hospital and Manukau Surgical Centre):**

*Date range – 01 March 2019 to 31 March 2020*

All incidents logged under the Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) with the Incident type: 'Sterilisation/Disinfectant Issue'.

A total of Fifty-two incidents were identified in the time-frame requested:

- **Packaging incidents** (such as holes in guards, water in equipment sets, or no indicators that enable staff to determine whether the set was properly sterilised): 21 incidents reported
- **Foreign bodies identified in equipment sets** (foreign bodies includes hair, bone, blood, tape and other unknown/unidentified items): 31 incidents reported

Importantly, in all these events, CSSD or operating theatre staff identified the items were faulty before the equipment was used in any surgical procedure. Given the total volume of sets processed per month (more than 30,500 sets), incidents this year reflects an error rate of just 0.012%. All the items were removed, cleaned and sterilised/ re-processed, and checked before being used for a surgical procedure.

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**