

14th April 2021

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – NOS Data

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 16th March 2021, you requested the following information:

I am investigating a story about the rise in the use of nitrous oxide, also known as NOS, whippets, nangs and laughing gas. Can you please provide the following information available under the Official Information Act:

- 1. The number of people per month over the last 12 months who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.**
- 2. The number of people per month over the last 12 months who have been admitted to hospital as a result of the use of nitrous oxide.**
- 3. The age of people per month over the last 12 months who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.**
- 4. The gender of the people per month over the last 12 months who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.**
- 5. The ethnicity of people per month over the last 12 months who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.**

You contacted us on the 17th March 2021 and added to your request as follows:

I'd like to alter my request from the last 12 months to the last two years please.

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 8,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 601,490 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

In response to your request, it is important to note when a patient presents to our Emergency Department for care, their presenting medical condition is recorded in our admission system, rather than necessarily the underlying cause of their condition. Given the nature of drug intoxication and its effects, patients may be recorded as having experienced a specific medical event (e.g. seizures, withdrawal), or in some cases as either specified or non-specified drug intoxication or withdrawal.

In some cases, our data will record where a substance is thought to have contributed to the underlying medical issue. This will always be recorded on the basis of what clinicians are told, rather than as a result of testing for a particular substance. This information is anecdotal rather than evidence based, and relies on what we are told by the patient or their family/friends or emergency services.

We do not have a specific presentation coding for this presenting condition however we have conducted a search for presenting symptoms of *Nitrous Oxide, Nos, Whippets, Nangs and Laughing Gas* as a presenting symptom in the Emergency Department.

1. The number of people per month over the last two years who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.

Due to privacy reasons, numbers lower than three have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of individuals.

Year	Presentations to ED
2019	-
2020	<3

Table 1: Data Sourced Health Intelligence & Informatics 17.03.2021

2. The number of people per month over the last two years who have been admitted to hospital as a result of the use of nitrous oxide.

Due to privacy reasons, numbers lower than three have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of individuals.

Year	Admissions to Hospital
2019	-
2020	<3

Table 2: Data Sourced Health Intelligence & Informatics 17.03.2021

3. The age of people per month over the last two years who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.

Due to privacy reasons we have provided this information in age ranges and withheld for numbers lower than three. Withholding to protect withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of individuals.

Year	Volume of ED Presentations by Age Group		
	0-14	15-64	64+
2019	-	-	-
2020	-	<3	-

Table 3: Data Sourced Health Intelligence & Informatics 17.03.2021

4. The gender of the people per month over the last two years who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide.

Due to privacy reasons, numbers lower than three have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of individuals.

Gender	Volume of ED Presentations by Gender
Male	-
Female	<3

Table 4: Data Sourced Health Intelligence & Informatics 17.03.2021

5. The ethnicity of people per month over the last two years who have been seen in your emergency department in relation to the use of nitrous oxide. Due to privacy reasons, numbers lower than three have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of individuals.

Volume of Inpatients by Ethnicity				
Arrival year	Maaori	Pacific	Asian	Other
2019	-	-	-	-
2020	-	-	-	<3

Table 5: Data Sourced Health Intelligence & Informatics 17.03.2021

I trust this information answers your request. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health