

19th February 2021

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Methadone Dispensing

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 8th January 2021, you requested the following information:

- **Methadone dispensings by calendar year, for the years of 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016;**
- **The longest consecutive period of time a person has been dispensed methadone through the DHB (if known by patient NHI) as of 2020**

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. 595,590 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.

Community drug and alcohol services are regionally provided by Waitemata District Health Board and we have liaised with them to formulate this response. We have interpreted your request to be about methadone dispensing, as distinct from methadone prescribing. Methadone dispensing occurs via community pharmacies in the Counties Manukau district.

- **Methadone dispensing's by calendar year, for the years of 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016;**
The information requested is publicly available and can be found using the interactive data tool on the Ministry of Health website by following the steps below:
 - <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/pharmaceutical-data-web-tool>
 - Refer to information related to "methadone hydrochloride" and filter by DHB for Counties Manukau DHB.

The information for methadone dispensing for 2020 has not yet been published on the MoH website and is available for the first three quarters of 2020 only. This is because community pharmacies have up to three months to submit the electronic claim after the date the medicine is dispensed. Dispensing's for the first three quarters of 2020 were:

Methadone hydrochloride dispensing			
	Q1 Jan-Mar 2020	Q2 Apr-Jun 2020	Q3 Jul-Sept 2020
Counties Manukau	16,248	16,584	17,214

- **The longest consecutive period of time a person has been dispensed methadone through the DHB (if known by patient NHI) as of 2020**

We do not hold this information in a central database. The DHB funds community pharmacies to dispense methadone to clients who reside in Counties Manukau catchment. This funding is linked to the individual regardless of which pharmacy supplies the medicine in New Zealand.

There are therefore, limitations in providing an accurate response as individual pharmacies will not hold records about an individual person's on-going methadone use. Furthermore, patients may move to pharmacies outside the CM Health area for various reasons.

We are, therefore, declining your request under Sections 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 as the information requested does not exist.

The DHB considered whether this information could be provided from a prescribing rather than a dispensing perspective, however providing this information would require manual review of individual clinical records of patients. Due to the sensitivity of this information, frontline clinical staff would need to review individual clinical files which would take them away from their clinical work and impact our ability to provide core clinical services. We are, therefore, declining that aspect under Sections 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982 due to substantial collation or research.

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