

23rd February 2022



Official Information Act Request for – Media During Covid-19

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 22nd January 2022, you requested the following information:

- 1. What was your board’s policy regarding media access to your DHB premises to interview staff and patients, and take photographs and video before any COVID-19 restrictions were introduced?**
- 2. Were any new conditions for media access introduced as a result of COVID-19?**
- 3. If so, how was this decision made and why?**
- 4. What were the new conditions and how did they affect access at different alert levels and under the current traffic light system?**
- 5. What is your board’s intentions for the future regards media access under COVID-19?**
- 6. Do you feel your media access rules are consistent with the media’s responsibilities to report accurately and promptly on issues, and also with the right of patients and staff to interact freely with the media if they consent?**

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.

- 1. What was your board’s policy regarding media access to your DHB premises to interview staff and patients, and take photographs and video before any COVID-19 restrictions were introduced?**

The CMDHB Media Policy is publicly available on our website, and notes the following in relation to Media visiting the hospital:

“Media visiting the hospital

- *No film or media crew may be on CM Health premises without the express permission of the Group Communications Manager or Communications Team who will liaise with the relevant General Manager, Chief Nurse, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Allied Health, Director of Hospital Services or similar delegated authority.*
- *No member of staff or a patient may be filmed, photographed or interviewed without the express permission of the Group Communications Manager or Communications Team.*
- *No member of staff or a patient may be photographed or filmed without their permission, preferably in writing.*
- *Any media found on CM Health property without permission will be escorted off the premises by security.*
- *Security will be advised in advance by the Group Communications Manager or Communications Team of legitimate media presence.”*

“Code of Conduct for Media on CMDHB Site

Important: The following interview/filming procedures are to be followed as part of CM Health permission to interview and/or film within CM Health facilities. If you do not agree to the following procedures, CM Health withdraws permission to interview/film within our facilities.”

“Specific Filming/Interviewing/Observation Conditions

- *The rights to privacy, confidentiality and safety of the patient, his/her family and staff, are paramount at all times.*
- *The premises must be left in the same condition as they are found.*
- *Film crew must observe the hospital’s health and safety procedures e.g. obeying fire alarms.*
- *If lights or equipment are interfering with staff procedures they may not be used.*
- *The film crew may only film clinical procedures with the express permission of the GM, clinician in charge and the Group Communications Manager.*
- *Any deviations from the plan or timetable to be discussed with the clinician in charge and the Group Communications Manager.*
- *NO close ups of patients or families unless permission is granted by the patient and/or families at the consultant’s initiation.*
- *NO other staff are to be interviewed.*
- *Staff must give their consent to be in any background shots.*
- *If staff ask the crew to stop shooting at any time, they must stop immediately.*
- *If staff ask the crew to leave CM Health premises at any time, they must leave immediately.*
- *Staff reserve the right to withdraw consent at any time up to, during or 7 days after filming.”*

- 2. Were any new conditions for media access introduced as a result of COVID-19?**
- 3. If so, how was this decision made and why?**
- 4. What were the new conditions and how did they affect access at different alert levels and under the current traffic light system?**

No new conditions were introduced for media access as a result of Covid-19.

As per the media policy and the response to question 1, media may only be on CM Health premises with permission from the Group Communications Manager or the Communications Team. Media access is coordinated by the Communications Team and would be facilitated appropriately during Covid-19.

Following national guidelines, CM Health requests patients, staff and visitors including media wear a mask (unless exempt) and adhere to physical distancing requirements.

- 5. What is your board’s intentions for the future regards media access under COVID-19?**

This is not a request for official information and is something that our Board has not discussed.

6. Do you feel your media access rules are consistent with the media's responsibilities to report accurately and promptly on issues, and also with the right of patients and staff to interact freely with the media if they consent?

This is not a request for official information however CM Health tries to facilitate all media interviews as requested while balancing our obligation to protect both our staff and patients' privacy.

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



Dr Peter Watson
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health