

22nd April 2021

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Dear ██████████

Official Information Act Request for – Isolation in DHB Hospitals

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 19th March 2021, you requested the following information:

I would like to request, under the Official Information Act, information about patients placed in isolation within DHB hospitals to prevent the spread of disease.

1. **Could you please provide the following data in an excel spreadsheet?**
 - a) **The number of patients placed in isolation in a DHB hospital in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 calendar years, broken down by year**
 - b) **What condition each person had**
 - c) **What type of isolation were they in - contact, droplet, airborne, protective etc**

2. **Also, can you please tell me:**
 - a) **What the longest stint in continuous isolation was during those three years, what condition it was for and what type of isolation they were in.**
 - b) **What PPE and protocols are required for each type of isolation (contact, droplet, airborne, protective, etc)?**
 - c) **How many of last year's cases were Covid-19 related?**
 - d) **Did the emergence of Covid-19 cause changes to any of the PPE or protocols required?**

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.

I would like to request, under the Official Information Act, information about patients placed in isolation within DHB hospitals to prevent the spread of disease.

1. Could you please provide the following data in an excel spreadsheet?

- a) The number of patients placed in isolation in a DHB hospital in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 calendar years, broken down by year**
- b) What condition each person had**
- c) What type of isolation were they in - contact, droplet, airborne, protective etc**

We are unable to provide figures for the number of patients placed into isolation at CM Health specifically for the purpose of containing the spread of a communicable disease. This is because isolation or side rooms are used for a number of reasons including for palliative care purposes, security or other.

To provide the information you are seeking would require the review of thousands of individual clinical records of patients. Due to the sensitivity of this information, frontline clinical staff would need to review these individual clinical files and it would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records. This would take frontline clinical staff away from their clinical work and prejudice our ability to provide core clinical services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to this aspect of your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. We have, therefore, determined to decline this element of your request under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act due to substantial collation and research.

2. Also, can you please tell me:

- a) What the longest stint in continuous isolation was during those three years, what condition it was for and what type of isolation they were in.**

As above, we are unable to provide this information as it would require the review of individual clinical records of patients. Due to the sensitivity of this information, frontline clinical staff would need to review these individual clinical files and it would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records. This would take the frontline staff away from their clinical work and prejudice our ability to provide core clinical services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to this aspect of your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. We have, therefore, determined to decline this element of your request under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act due to substantial collation and research.

- b) What PPE and protocols are required for each type of isolation (contact, droplet, airborne, protective, etc)?**

CM Health uses transmission-based precautions in addition to standard precautions and these are designed to interrupt the mode by which the organism is transmitted.

The type of transmission-based precautions applied is based upon the mode of transmission of the pathogen. For diseases that have multiple routes of transmission, more than one transmission-based precaution category is applied.

The following are the routes of transmission:

- Airborne precautions, e.g. measles, pulmonary tuberculosis, and chicken pox (including disseminated shingles)
- Droplet precautions, e.g. Influenza, N. meningitis, Pertussis (whooping cough)

- Contact precautions (direct or indirect), e.g. multidrug-resistant organisms, viral gastroenteritis, MRSA, scabies.

c) How many of last year's cases were Covid-19 related?

CM Health had a total of 25 confirmed and 4 probable cases of Covid-19 in 2020; these patients were isolated as either a confirmed case or a patient under investigation for Covid-19.

We would like to note that patients presenting with any symptom of a respiratory tract infection or risk factors for Covid-19 are initially isolated as a precaution. We approach such situations with caution to avoid inadvertent possible onward transmission of Covid-19.

d) Did the emergence of Covid-19 cause changes to any of the PPE or protocols required?

As Covid-19 was constantly evolving, so did the management of the patients and increased use of personal protective equipment (PPE). There was also a combination of transmission based precautions i.e. PPE used to manage Covid-19 patients based on a patient's clinical presentation.

The Northern Region DHBs are following the best available evidence on infection prevention and control (IP&C) strategies to prevent or limit transmission of Covid-19 in healthcare settings. These are aligned with World Health Organization and National Ministry of Health guidelines and are regularly reviewed and updated as required. The correct and appropriate use of PPE is an essential part of reducing the spread of pathogens however incorrect use increases the risk of exposure.

This guideline was filtered down through services and is accessible to all staff in our organisation through our communication systems. All our clinical teams will be familiar with this guidance, and trained in the correct use of all the strategies above, including PPE. For CM Health, development of this guideline also included PPE refresher trainings and instructional videos to further support staff in the use of PPE.

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