

08 December 2021

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Official Information Request for COVID and Drug Use Data

I refer to your official information request dated 01 December 2021 for the following information:

People who experience addiction are at increased risk from COVID-19, and I would like to understand the degree to which they are shouldering the burden of the most acute harms from the pandemic in Auckland.

We request this information be provided with urgency because of the ongoing low rates of vaccination among people who experience addiction, and the ongoing risks faced in our communities around the country and in the Auckland region.

Please release the following information in regards to ADHB and/or NRHCC:

- 1. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine.**
- 2. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using illicit substances.**
- 3. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as being addicted to alcohol or other drugs.**
- 4. Any reports or communication that refer to the percentage or number of people admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine, other illicit substances or experiencing addiction.**

Please note that we are not seeking individual patient information that could breach their patient confidentiality. Only overall statistics and numbers.

Please provide this information in an accessible, searchable format.

I understand that Alex Pimm, Director Patient Management Services, has discussed your request with you to seek clarification as well as advice on how the information would be provided. We have provided the information under each of your questions below.

1. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine.

During 2021, six patient events had coded diagnoses for both COVID-19 and methamphetamine use.

2. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using illicit substances.

During 2021, 10 patient events had coded diagnoses for both COVID-19 and for illicit substance use.

3. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as being addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

During 2021, seven patient events had coded diagnoses for both COVID-19 and for being addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

4. Any reports or communication that refer to the percentage or number of people admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine, other illicit substances or experiencing addiction.

We are not aware of any reports that specifically refer to the number or percentage of people admitted with COVID-19 symptoms that have also been identified as using methamphetamine or other illicit substances or experiencing addiction. We are therefore declining this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as the information does not exist.

Identifying any other communication relating to the percentage or number of people admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine, other illicit substances or experiencing addiction will require us to review several people's emails as well as a manual review of multiple other documents. Given the broad nature of your request completing this work would require significant time and amount to substantial collation and research, which would impact on our ability to provide our core public health services. We are therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act.

Notes to responses to questions 1, 2 and 3:

Only patient events with a coded diagnosis of COVID-19 (not symptoms) and relevant substance use/dependence coding have been included in this data set, as discussed with you by telephone call with Mr Pimm. To have a coded diagnosis, the patient must have a stay of greater than three hours and have been discharged. Coding is completed after the patient is discharged. The data is as per visits coded on 04/01/2022 and as such this therefore may not be a complete dataset for 2021 as some clinical coding is still to be completed during January 2022.

There is overlap between the three groups – patients may appear in all three groups depending on their substance use diagnosis and patients may also have more than one event.

Not everyone who is a substance user will have met the additional diagnosis criteria, so this dataset will be incomplete. Due to the number of COVID-19 positive patient events it is not feasible to undertake a manual review of all COVID-19 positive patient notes to identify patients who have not met the additional diagnosis criteria but may use illicit substances.

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 response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours sincerely,



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive