

06 April 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – COVID-19 hospital admissions

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received as a transfer from the Ministry of Health on 22 March seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about our procedures for determining if an admission is due to COVID-19.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing more than 8,900 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

1. Please indicate what is your exact procedure for determining that hospital admissions in this current time are, in fact, directly due to COVID-19?

Waitematā DHB records admissions of people with COVID-19 as people who arrive with a diagnosis made in the community or people diagnosed in hospital as part of routine patient-testing.

The determination of whether each hospitalisation is due to COVID-19 or whether COVID-19 is an incidental finding alongside another medical event can only be made after discharge, when the patient's clinical notes are reviewed and coded.

2. I.e.: are you testing people who are admitting themselves for something non-respiratory-related and if they test positive after admission for SARS-coV-2 [COVID-19], are you listing it as a COVID-19 admission regardless?

As noted above, all positive cases of COVID-19 are reviewed and coded following the patient's discharge and recorded as either being an admission due to COVID-19 or as an incidental finding of COVID-19 alongside another medical event.

3. I.e.: people who are admitted for something respiratory-related that is later diagnosed as not SARS-coV-2 [COVID-19], are you indicating them as COVID-19 hospitalisations if they return a positive test during admission?

Most of our patients have underlying health conditions; for this reason, it is not always clear if COVID-19 is the reason for their admission or if it is due to an underlying condition (e.g. congestive heart failure, lung disease or cellulitis) which is exacerbated by a new COVID-19 infection.

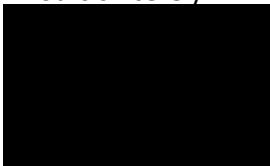
As above, all positive cases of COVID-19 are recorded as either due to COVID-19 or as an incidental finding of COVID-19 alongside another medical event. Patients initially admitted for a respiratory-related illness who are diagnosed with COVID-19 later on in their illness will be recorded as COVID-19 hospitalisations if COVID-19 is confirmed during their hospital admission.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



**COVID-19 Executive Lead
Waitematā District Health Board**