



8 October 2021

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: OIA request – Outpatient radiology assessments**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 6 September seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about Outpatient radiology assessments.

You requested the following information:

- 1. The number of outpatient radiology assessments/investigations per year for the past 5 years broken down under categories for X-ray, MRI, CT, Other, listed as an absolute number, percentage change from the previous year, number per capita for Māori and non-Māori and total for each category ?**
- 2. The number of outpatient radiology assessments/investigations per year for the past 5 years broken down under categories where there is a primary or main provisional diagnosis of cancer for X-ray, MRI, CT, Other, listed as an absolute number, percentage change from the previous year, number per capita for Māori and non-Māori and total for each category ?**

On 8 September, we contacted you to ask you to consider narrowing the scope of your request to the financial years from 2019 to 2021, as your request was for a large amount of information. That same day, you confirmed that you were happy to do this.

We contacted you again on 9 September to clarify the following aspects of your request and you replied as follows:

**Question 1 – Do you want interventional procedures included in these figures?**

A: Yes, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

**Question 2, 4 and 5 – The service does not record primary diagnosis – this may not be answerable for them. We will try to see if we can source the data from elsewhere but it is likely to be too complex to answer.**

A: Several options here. Where the provisional, differential or clinical reason for the procedure includes cancer. Where the discharge includes cancer. Where cancer is the first diagnosis in a diagnostic co-morbidity list.

**Question 3 – again, may be difficult to provide an answer as the service is constantly re-booking appointments due to a variety of reasons. We may not be able to definitively say how many were due to lockdowns.**

A: Any change to appointments during the lockdown dates will be fine, even if not attributable directly to coronavirus. I will note the assumption.

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 around 8,600 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. The number of outpatient radiology assessments/investigations per year for the 2019-2021 financial years, broken down under categories for X-ray, MRI, CT, Other, listed as an absolute number, percentage change from the previous year, number per capita for Māori and non-Māori and total for each category?**

Please refer to **Attachment 1**.

- 2. The number of outpatient radiology assessments/investigations per year for the 2019-2021 financial years, broken down under categories where there is a primary or main provisional diagnosis of cancer for X-ray, MRI, CT, Other, listed as an absolute number, percentage change from the previous year, number per capita for Māori and non-Māori and total for each category ?**

Financial year	CT		CT total	MRI		MRI total
	Māori	Non-Māori		Māori	Non-Māori	
2020	240	3546	3786	83	1182	1265
2021	332	4339	4671	113	1412	1525
Total	572	7885	8457	196	2594	2790
% change from FY2020 to FY2021	+38%	+22%	+23%	+36%	+19%	+21%

Please note, this data shows only CT and MRI due to the high volume of non-cancer related plain film imaging within cancer-streamed patients, for example, a patient may be on the lung cancer treatment pathway but require imaging for an unrelated condition, rendering data other than CT and MRI inaccurate. This part of your request is, therefore, refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982 as this information is not held by us.

For CT and MRI examinations, however, we are able to identify imaging related to cancer diagnosis, as these will be linked closely to patients on FCT pathways or be under specific oncology exam request codes.

- 3. The number of outpatient radiology investigations cancelled, delayed or postponed in Alert Levels 3 and 4 for the coronavirus outbreaks of 2020 and 2021, listed by level and year?**

Our Radiology Information System (RIS) does not have coding to collate this information. However, the figures below show the number of bookings where a free-text comment is noted against them, indicating that they were scheduled to be completed within the lockdown period and had to be delayed or postponed due to lockdown.

Please note that some of these free-text comments are subsequently removed as patients are re-booked. The higher volumes for August 2021 are because we are still currently in this lockdown and many of these free-text comments have not yet been removed. We estimate the volumes are probably roughly about the same for each lockdown.

To catch-up between lockdowns, we outsourced additional CT, MRI and US procedures to private radiology providers. We also ran additional sessions, where possible, to catch-up on outstanding referrals.

**March/April 2020 Alert Levels 4 and 3 lockdowns:**

CT	MRI	XR	Total
82	133	78	<b>293</b>

**August 2020 Alert Level 3 lockdown:**

CT	MRI	XR	Total
23	19	195	<b>237</b>

**August 2021 Alert Level 4 lockdown:**

CT	MRI	XR	Total
261	205	441	<b>907</b>

**4. The number of outpatient radiology investigations cancelled, delayed or postponed in Alert Levels 3 and 4 for the coronavirus outbreaks of 2020 and 2021 where the primary diagnosis or main provisional diagnosis was cancer, listed by level and year?**

Note, we have not been able to identify those that relate to specific Alert Levels, therefore, have provided March 2020, August 2020 and August 2021 groupings. As above, volumes appear higher for August 2021 due to some of the free-text comments about COVID-19-related delays being removed when a patient's appointment is re-scheduled.

Period	CT	MRI	Total
March 2020	14	9	23
August 2020	4	1	5
August 2021	44	11	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>83</b>

We have identified cancer patients using our Cancer Service's Faster Cancer Treatment (FCT) database. Please note that the patients excluded from the FCT database are those:

- i. ineligible for treatment in New Zealand
- ii. who have a treatment pathway that begins outside the New Zealand health system
- iii. with a recurrent cancer (irrespective of the time frame of recurrence)
- iv. with metastatic cancer and the patient's primary cancer has already been included in FCT reporting
- v. not under the care of adult services and/or are not 16 or older at the date of first cancer treatment
- vi. who have a first treatment for cancer that was undertaken privately
- vii. who have a primary diagnosis that is excluded from the FCT indicators because they relate to cancers that are low-risk, or non-invasive, or non-malignant, or low-grade, asymptomatic or indolent.

**5. The number of cancelled, delayed or postponed inpatient procedures in Alert Levels 3 and 4 to date where the primary diagnosis or main provisional diagnosis was cancer, listed by level?**

We do not have a record of inpatient radiology examinations that were cancelled, delayed or postponed where the primary diagnosis or main provisional diagnosis was cancer. At Alert Level 4,

all inpatient imaging required is still completed and we can confirm this was the case in our latest Alert Level 4 lockdown during August/September 2021.

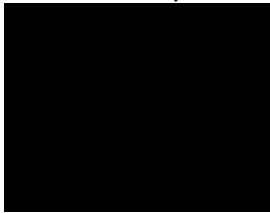
You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. Information about how to seek a review is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Freephone 0800 802 602.

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



**Executive Director Hospital Services  
Waitematā District Health Board**

Attachment 1

Outpatient Radiology Assessments															
	CT				MRI				Other						
	Māori	Māori per capita	Non-Māori	Non-Māori per capita	CT total	Māori	Māori per capita	Non-Māori	Non-Māori per capita	MRI Total	Māori	Māori per capita	Non-Māori	Non-Māori per capita	Other total
2019-2020 FY	887	0.014	12363	0.022	13250	636	0.010	7896	0.014	8532	2792	0.045	28218	0.051	31010
2020-2021 FY	1161	0.018	15333	0.027	16494	777	0.012	9164	0.016	9941	3055	0.048	31328	0.055	34383
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2048</b>		<b>27696</b>		<b>29744</b>	<b>1413</b>		<b>17060</b>		<b>18473</b>	<b>5847</b>		<b>59546</b>		<b>65393</b>
% Change from FY19/20 to 20/21	31%		24%		24%	22%		16%		17%	9%		11%		11%

	X-Ray				X-Ray Total	Total - all
	Māori	Māori per capita	Non-Māori	Non-Māori per capita		
2019-2020 FY	2929	0.047	36724	0.066	39653	92445
2020-2021 FY	3633	0.057	45969	0.081	49602	110420
<b>Total</b>	<b>6562</b>		<b>82693</b>		<b>89255</b>	<b>202865</b>
% Change from FY19/20 to 20/21	24%		25%		25%	19%

Year	DHB population	Māori %	Māori population	Non-Māori population
FY20	619000	10%	61900	557100
FY21	628770	10.20%	64134.54	564635.46

[The WDHB population data FY20 is quoted from the DHB Annual report 2019/2020](#)  
[The WDHB population data FY21 is quoted from the Ministry of Health website.](#)