



Waitematā
District Health Board

Best Care for Everyone

**Specialist Mental Health and
Addiction Services**

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6 June 2019



Dear 

Re: Official Information Act request – Patient deaths in inpatient mental health units

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received by Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) on 20 May 2019, requesting information about how many patients in our inpatient mental health units died in the past year. We note that you indicated the information will be used as part of a report by Stuff into the number of patients who have died in units across the country in the past year.

We acknowledge that public discussion about suicide can be useful. However, we respectfully ask that all information in any responses regarding suicide or suspected suicide is treated with sensitivity for the impact that public discussion about suicide can have, particularly any impact on individuals contemplating suicide. Guidelines for responsible media management of suicide reporting are published on the Mental Health Foundation website and can be found here:

https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/39/suicide-media-response-service?gclid=EAlalQobChMik_TIs4OP1wIVQqRoCh3D6g-2EAAAYASAAEgILL_D_BwE.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services to assist your understanding. Waitematā DHB serves a population of more than 630,000. Our Specialist Mental Health and Addiction Services are the largest of this kind in the country, by volume of service-users seen. The speciality comprises Adult Mental Health Services, Child Youth and Family Mental Health Services, Takanga a Fohe (Pacific mental health and addictions), Whitiki Maurea (Kāupapa Māori mental health and addictions), the Regional Forensic Psychiatry Service (covering Northland and greater Auckland regions) and Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS). All of our addictions services cover the Auckland region. Mental Health Services for Older Adults sits within Waitematā DHB's Speciality Medicine and Health of Older People Division.

We have endeavoured to answer all of your questions below.

I would like to know how many patients in your in-patient mental health units have died in the past year while being there. If you could please break these down into gender and age as well that'd be great. Also, I know this may not be possible due to privacy, but if you could can I please have cause

of death (e.g self-inflicted or not) and dates they happened.

Of the 1,247 people who have been treated in Waitematā DHB mental health inpatient units over the 12 months until 20 May 2019, there have been four deaths. All people who are deceased were male: one each in age groups 20-24 years, 25-29 years, 30-34 years and 75-79 years. The cause of death was suspected suicide¹ in three cases and natural causes in the fourth case.

Waitematā DHB has decided to withhold the dates that these deaths occurred to protect the privacy of the individuals and their families, under Section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act. If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you are entitled to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, whose details are available via www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

I trust this information will satisfy your request. Waitematā DHB, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's 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 feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Dr Susanna Galea-Singer
Director
Specialist Mental Health & Addictions Services

¹ [Only the Coroner can make a finding of suicide.](#)