

17 December 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – dental emergency department presentations

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Ministry of Health (MoH) on 31 October seeking information on dental emergency department presentations.

The MoH formally transferred part of your request to Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) on 22 November 2019, in accordance with section 14 of the Official Information Act 1982 (request detailed below).

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

Waitematā DHB serves a population of more than 630,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas, the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 7,500 people across more than 80 different locations.

In addition to providing services to our own population, we are also the metropolitan Auckland provider of forensic psychiatry, child disability services, 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 people who present to a hospital emergency department with dental issues in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, itemised by year and per hospital from Waitematā DHB.**

Year	North Shore Hospital	Waitakere Hospital	Total
2014	207	290	497
2015	204	292	496
2016	196	289	485
2017	142	327	469
2018	148	333	481
2019	133	268	401

Please note that dental problems are a small part of the overall volume of ED presentations. For example, the North Shore Hospital Emergency Department sees around 70,000+ presentations a year, while the Waitakere Hospital Emergency Department sees around 57,000+ presentations, with figures increasing year-on-year.

2. **What is the standard procedure when someone presents to the emergency department with a dental problem? Please explain standard procedure for cases where treatment is refused, and where treatment is administered.**

Patients presenting to the emergency department with a dental problem undergo a nursing assessment, followed by a medical assessment which may or may not include special investigations such as blood tests or x-rays. The majority of patients are treated with pain relief and antibiotics if necessary and asked to see their dentist.

A small number (less than 5%) are referred to the maxilla facial service at Counties Manukau DHB which provides the regional dental service for acute dental work. These referrals are for dental trauma and severe dental infections requiring acute specialist service.

Treatment is not refused and the vast majority of patients are treated in the ambulatory consults area in the department.

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



Debbie Holdsworth
Director Hospital Services
Waitematā District Health Board