

3 November 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Number of patients treated for gunshot wounds and stabbing injuries

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 8 October seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about the number of people treated for gunshot wounds and stabbing injuries.

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 8,500 people across more than 80 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:

In September last year, I submitted an OIA to Auckland's three DHBs on firearms and stabbing injuries. It included figures for 2016, 2017, 2018 and year-to-date for 2019. It resulted in this story: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/auckland-gun-violence-147-auckland-firearms-victims-hospitalised-during-spate-of-shootings/27QBE4XIG3H7TSIHCN747574CA/>

I would like to submit the same OIA for the same period but updated to include full 2019 figures and year-to-date (YTD) for 2020.

I'm including all three DHBs in this email in a bid to ensure the figures are correlated in similar ways. Waitematā DHB figures, for instance, seemed low in comparison to Auckland DHB and Counties Manukau Health last year. I have attached Counties Manukau Health's response from last year, which includes the various codes used to categorise firearms injuries.

Please let me know if you [need me to] provide any clarity on this request.

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

Please provide figures on:

1) How many patients have been treated for gunshot wounds at North Shore and Waitakere hospitals?

a. Please provide a breakdown for 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 YTD.

2) Please provide further breakdown of the injuries in terms of

a. Severity (fatal/ critical/ serious/ moderate etc),

b. Which body parts were wounded?

c. What types of firearms were used (if known)?

3) Please provide figures on the estimated cost of treating patients with gunshot wounds, for each of the above time periods.

4) Please provide any relevant comment.

5) Finally, please provide the same figures and breakdowns for patients with stabbing injuries.

Our emergency departments see more than 100,000 presentations per year.

In order to respond to your request, we have used the same coding as that used in Counties Manukau Health response to you on 27 September 2019. The additional codes used have resulted in the higher figures provided in this response.

For **gunshot wounds** we used various codes related to guns - W32-W34, X72-X74 and X93-X95 – including all cases from any causes - accidental, assault or self-harm, not just those from violence.

For **stabbing injuries** we used clinical code X99 and note that this is a broad topic encompassing assault by any sharp object. The search criteria included the following filtered keywords: "knife", "knives", "stab", "stabbing", "stabbed". This will include all presentations from any causes, not only those resulting from violence.

We have included cases seen and discharged from each of North Shore and Waitakere hospitals' emergency departments. To provide the available data in response to your request we used a free-text search for the following keywords: "*Gunshot*"-related injury.

With regards to Question 2 requesting details on severity, which body parts were wounded and what types of firearms were used we advise the following:

It is not possible to provide information on the severity of an injury from coding, as this is a clinical judgement and would require further manual review of the individual medical records. As an indication of severity, we identified cases based on length of hospital admission by patients who stayed less than five days in hospital and those who were admitted for more than five days.

In regards to "body part wounded", we have provided a combined summary of the numbers of injuries by main body parts over the requested four-year period. Providing further details for these cases may enable the identification of individuals, given the small numbers involved each year.

We have considered the balance of public interest in this information and the high privacy interests of these individuals. We do not believe the public interest outweighs the right to privacy, and are, therefore, declining to provide any further details matched for each case under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect the privacy of individuals.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision via www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

We are not able to provide information on “types of firearms” used as we do not code the type of firearm/weapon involved in injuries and in many cases the hospital will not hold this information.

Please note that lower costs are incurred for patients presenting to Waitakere Hospital’s Emergency Department as these are likely to be for minor injuries not requiring acute surgery. Patients with injuries of a more serious nature may be transferred to North Shore Hospital, Auckland City Hospital or Middlemore Hospital, depending on the type of treatment required.

The information for each of your questions, where we are able to provide it, is as follows:

North Shore Hospital – gunshot injuries					
Body part	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Unknown/ not specified	9	6	5	3	4
Leg			1	1	2
Hand		2	1		1
Arm					1
Back				1	
Total	9	8	7	5	8
Cost of treatment	\$58,130	\$27,179	\$32,523	\$41,897	\$90,402

North Shore Hospital – length-of-stay from gunshot injuries			
Calendar year	< 5 days	> = 5 days	Total days
2016	8	1	9
2017	8	0	8
2018	6	1	7
2019	3	2	5
2020	6	2	8

Waitakere Hospital - gunshot injuries					
Body Part	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Unknown/ not specified	2	1	0	1	0
Cost of treatment	\$1,587	\$738	0	\$582	0

Waitakere Hospital - length of stay from gunshot injuries			
Calendar year	< 5 days	> = 5 days	Total days
2016	2	0	2
2017	1	0	1
2018	0	0	0
2019	1	0	1
2020	0	0	0

North Shore Hospital - stabbing injuries					
Number of cases	Calendar year				
Body Part	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Unknown/ not specified	13	13	14	6	7
Head/ neck/ shoulder/ face	3		2	2	3
Leg	1	1	1	2	1
Back	1				
Total	18	14	17	10	11
Cost of treatment	\$81,569	\$33,168	\$70,989	\$38,005	\$22,731

North Shore Hospital – length-of-stay from stabbing injuries			
Calendar year	Length-of-stay (LOS)		
	< 5 days	> = 5 days	Total days
2016	15	3	18
2017	14	0	14
2018	16	1	17
2019	9	1	10
2020	11	0	11

Waitakere Hospital - stabbing injuries					
Number of Cases	Calendar year				
Body Part	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Unknown/ not specified	9	11	5	12	9
Head/ neck/ shoulder/ face	1		2		
Arm			1		
Leg				1	
Total	10	11	8	13	9
Cost of treatment	\$11,738	\$13,802	\$7,851	\$21,909	\$13,810

Waitakere Hospital – length-of-stay from stabbing injuries			
Number of cases	LOS		
Calendar year	< 5 days	> = 5 days	Total days
2016	10	0	10
2017	11	0	11
2018	8	0	8
2019	13	0	13
2020	9	0	9

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Mark Shepherd
Director Provider Healthcare Services
Waitematā District Health Board