



17 December 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: OIA request – COVID-19 symptom admissions identified as substance-users**

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 1 December seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about the number of people who experience addiction who have been admitted with Covid-19 symptoms. You requested the following information:

**People who experience addiction are at increased risk from COVID-19 and I would like to understand the degree to which they are shouldering the burden of the most acute harms from the pandemic in Auckland.**

**We request this information be provided with urgency because of the ongoing low rates of vaccination among people who experience addiction and the ongoing risks faced in our communities around the country and in the Auckland region.**

**Please release the following information in regards to Waitematā DHB and/or NRHCC:**

- 1. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine.**
- 2. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using illicit substances.**
- 3. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as being addicted to alcohol or other drugs.**

**Any reports or communication that refer to the percentage or number of people admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine, other illicit substances or experiencing addiction.**

**Please note that we are not seeking individual patient information that could breach their patient confidentiality. Only overall statistics and numbers.**

**Please provide this information in an accessible, searchable format.**

On 2 December, we contacted you to advise that we were interpreting your request as relating to the adult population. That same day, you confirmed you were seeking information for over-18-year-olds.

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 can provide the following information:

1. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using methamphetamine.
2. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as using illicit substances.
3. Any aggregated and anonymised data showing the number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptom during 2021 that have also been identified as being addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

We are providing a combined response to questions 1, 2 and 3. Please note that the following information includes figures for our adult mental health unit, He Puna Hauora (North), and North Shore and Waitakere hospitals. It should be noted that COVID-19-positive patients are not admitted to either the adult mental health unit Waiatarau (West) or Waitakere Hospital but are transferred to the North Shore for treatment.

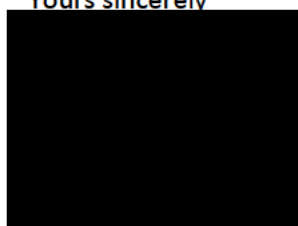
Number of patients admitted with COVID-19 symptoms identified as using or being addicted to illicit substances/alcohol from January-November 2021	
1. Patients identified as using methamphetamine	18
2. Patients identified as using illicit substances	14
3. Patients identified as being addicted to alcohol or other drugs	45
Total	76
Total hospital attendances with COVID-19 symptoms	1,395

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