

6 November 2020



Dear 

Re: OIA request - Electroconvulsive therapy

Thank you for your Official Information Act request partially transferred to Waitematā DHB by the Ministry of Health (MoH) on 12 October 2020 seeking information about electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) machines at District Health Boards (DHBs).

The MoH transferred questions B, C, E and H to Waitematā DHB.

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

There are strict criteria for prescribing ECT and Waitematā DHB observes a formalised consenting process in relation to this as follows:

- Only referrals from a referring psychiatrist are accepted by the ECT team.
- The referring psychiatrist discusses the treatment with the patient.
- The patient is given a Waitematā DHB information pack about ECT treatment – this includes printed information which is available on the Ministry of Health website, as well as access to patient information videos.

Family/whānau are involved wherever possible and a consultation meeting with the ECT team is provided for further assessment as to suitability and so that any further questions can be answered.

People can choose to have ECT treatment on a voluntary basis and it can also be provided compulsorily under the Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992. In addition, if the person is not competent to consent or the family/whānau are not supportive of ECT and it is considered a life-preserving intervention, a second medical opinion is sought from a Mental Health Act Tribunal-approved psychiatrist.

A decision about whether to proceed with treatment is then made at a professionals' case review. Where ECT is provided at the patient's choosing, that person can discontinue this treatment at any time.

In response to the questions transferred to us for a response, we can provide the following information:

B. Are there different machines in use in different DHBs?

Waitematā DHB does not hold information on the types of machines used at other DHBs.

C. How many machines are in use in at Waitematā DHB?

We have two devices in use, with one actively used and the other available as a back-up to ensure continuity of treatment should the other device be unavailable.

E. If most of the machines are of a particular manufacturer, how long have they been in use, I am particularly interested in the age and make of the ECT machines in the Waitematā DHB?

At Waitematā DHB we use Thymatron ECT machines. There are two machines currently in use. One was purchased in March 2015 and the other in June 2013. The machines are currently on a 10-year replacement schedule. They receive scheduled annual servicing, overseen by the clinical engineering team.

H. Does the Ministry have any statistics of any complaints about ECT that have been made to DHBs, and if so, please provide similar information broken down annually in the period 1 January 2010, to 1 January 2020.

In the time period from January 2010 to January 2020, Waitematā DHB has a record of one complaint related to ECT, received in 2015.

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



Dr Murray Patton
Clinical Director
Specialist Mental Health and Addiction Services
Waitematā District Health Board