



9 September 2019

Belinda Hodson

fyi-request-10839-c7772955@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ms Hodson

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request for information of 30 July 2019 for:

1. *Changes/Updates to Reference Ranges for all Thyroid tests (TSH, Free T3, RT3, thyroid anti-body etc.) recommended by Pathlab and approved by the Waikato DHB for implementation by Pathlab; and implemented by Pathlab, during the period 1st January 2010 to 20 July 2018; along with:*
 - a) *the rationale for these updates/changes and the citation list of the clinical publications supporting these changes/updates (clinical research studies and other clinical papers including guidelines referenced); plus*
 - b) *the associated 'clinical updates' for these changes/updates that have been posted in the clinicians information area of Pathlab's website.*
 - c) *Copies of reports of these updates/changes provided to the Waikato District Health Board by Pathlab or produced by the Waikato District Health Board which monitors the impact of these updates/changes on patient's health and well-being.*
2. *For the period 1 January 2010 to 20 July 2019 copies of all correspondence associated with Waikato DHB and Pathlab approved updates./changes to thyroid taking policy (the thyroid tests themselves and reference ranges) with other NZ medical lab companies, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Ministry of Health.*

I enclose the following information covered by your request.

1. *Changes/Updates to Reference Ranges for all Thyroid tests (TSH, Free T3, RT3, thyroid anti-body etc.) recommended by Pathlab and approved by the Waikato DHB for implementation by Pathlab; and implemented by Pathlab, during the period 1st January 2010 to 20 July 2018*

Answer

Pathlab has been asked to provide this information which is attached. We can confirm that the Waikato DHB Clinical Laboratory Group reviews and approves all recommendation for any changes to tests. This group is clinically led and has both hospital and Pathlab pathologists, secondary clinicians and general practitioners as members they ensure that the best clinical care is not impacted by any change to tests.

- a) *The rationale for these updates /changes and the citation list of the clinical guidelines supporting these changes, clinical research studies and other clinical papers including reference guidelines);*

Answer

The rationale is summarised in the Pathlab response. See below for information provided

- b) *The associated “clinical updates “ for these changes /updates that have been posted in the clinicians information area of Pathlab website ; plus;*

All relevant clinical updates are attached

- c) *Copies of reports of these updates provided to the Waikato DHB by Pathlab or produced by the Waikato DHB which monitors the impact of these updates /changes on patients health and well-being*

Answer

All copies of clinical of updates are provided to Waikato DHB. Waikato DHB is unaware of whether any monitoring has been undertaken of these updates/ changes on patient’s health or wellbeing. We have received no concerns expressed directly from general practitioners or secondary clinicians on any impacts on patient’s health.

2. *For the period 1 January 2010 to 20 July 2019 copies of all correspondence associated with Waikato DHB and Pathlab approved updates./changes to thyroid taking policy (the thyroid tests themselves and reference ranges) with other NZ medical lab companies, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Ministry of Health.*

Answer

Thyroid Testing

A letter was received from TANZi (Thyroid Association of New Zealand) regarding their objection to the restriction of thyroid testing recently approved by the CLCGG citing negative impacts on patients in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty. They alleged that Pathlab’s current policy on thyroid testing is based on clinical evidence that is outdated and inaccurate and that they have an over-reliance on TSH testing and an under-reliance on other thyroid blood tests to accurately measure thyroid function and suggested that there was a misunderstanding of the importance of these tests, particularly the Free T3 test. They submitted scientific articles in support of their position.

The hospital chemical pathologist advised the group that we are following BPAC Guidelines. He reviewed all evidence submitted by TANZi and remains unconvinced.

GPs used to order T3, T4, TSH – for unknown reasons, there is interference between the tests and the follow-ups are extremely expensive and convoluted with no outcome i.e. they are causing patients harm.

Pathlab Business Manager indicated that if Pathlab gets a request for a T3 test, a message goes back to the GP that if he/she really wants it done, please phone. If it is not clinically indicated the patient has the option of paying. One GP expressed concerns to Pathlab.

Attachments

- 19 March 2012: the Variation to Schedule Purchase Test is attached
- 4 December 2012: The PHO Performance Report on TSH tests is attached
- 19 May 2017: Letters between TANZI, and the chemical pathologist and Memorandum are attached
- 7 December 2017: Managing Demand for Tests. Investigating Thyroid Function (pbac) previously available prior to 2010 was on the Agenda for Community Laboratory Services Clinical Governance Group – the relevant minute from that meeting is written in full below with the only change being people's names replaced by their actual roles to protect privacy.
- 20 July 2019: Email request for information related to this OIA sent to Pathlab

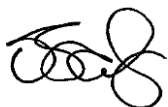
Information withheld

Some of the information you have requested has been withheld under Section 18(d) of the Official Information Act 1982 because the information requested is, or will soon be, publicly available.

You have the right to request the Ombudsman investigate and review the decision to withhold the information. The Ombudsman's postal address is:

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsmen
P O Box 10-152
WELLINGTON

Yours sincerely



Philip Grady
Interim Executive Director Strategy, Funding and Public Health