

18 June 2020

Vonny Marsh

By email: fyi-request-12852-5d5fff55@requests.fyi.org.nz  
Ref: H202003444

Dear Mr Marsh

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request on 15 May 2020 to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for:

*“Please advise, as at time of your response, how many people who died of Covid19 in NZ had received the flu shot in the months/days leading up to the date they passed away.*

*For the people who did receive the flu vaccination, please provide their age at date of death, and number of days prior to passing that they received the flu shot, and if they were a confirmed (via testing) or a probable covid (please clarify negative tested or not tested at all).*

*Furthermore, can you please provide clarity around why and how some deaths are described as covid deaths, while tested negative?*

*As at the date of your response, how many of NZ deaths related to covid:*

*-tested positive,*

*-how many tested negative,*

*-and how many were not tested at all?*

*Is it protocol to remove any negative tested dead from our NZ covid death stats?*

*Is it protocol to remove any negative tested patients from the covid stats, or do they stay as probable (due to symptoms) even if tested negative?*

*Are the negative tested covid deaths reported to World Health Organisation?”*

I will respond to your questions in turn.

*Please advise, as at time of your response, how many people who died of Covid19 in NZ had received the flu shot in the months/days leading up to the date they passed away. For the people who did receive the flu vaccination, please provide their age at date of death, and number of days prior to passing that they received the flu shot, and if they were a confirmed (via testing) or a probable covid (please clarify negative tested or not tested at all).*

The Ministry does not hold this information as it has not been recorded or reported on. For this reason, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry or another agency subject to the Act.

For context, flu immunisation data and COVID-19 data are held in separate systems that cannot interface. To provide this information would involve sharing patient-identifiable information across Ministry directorates and cross-referencing this with the information in the National Immunisation Register (NIR).

*Furthermore, can you please provide clarity around why and how some deaths are described as covid deaths, while tested negative?*

The Ministry's public reporting of COVID-19 deaths include probable and confirmed cases. Including figures on probable cases provides a better picture of what is happening in New Zealand.

*As at the date of your response, how many of NZ deaths related to covid: -tested positive, - how many tested negative, -and how many were not tested at all?*

At the time of your request, of the 21 deaths reported, 16 were confirmed cases and five were probable cases. Of the probable cases, two were not tested and three tested negative.

*Is it protocol to remove any negative tested dead from our NZ covid death stats?*

No, it is not protocol.

*Is it protocol to remove any negative tested patients from the covid stats, or do they stay as probable (due to symptoms) even if tested negative?*

Patients who test negative for COVID-19 but still displayed symptoms of COVID-19 remained as probable cases provided they meet that case definition. Information on the case definitions is publicly available on the Ministry website:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/case-definitions-22may20.pdf>.

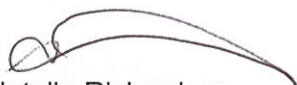
*Are the negative tested covid deaths reported to World Health Organisation?*

Yes, deceased individuals who are considered probable cases, with negative test results, are reported to the World Health Organisation.

I trust this information fulfils your request. You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made in response to your request.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website.

Yours sincerely



Natalie Richardson  
**Director**  
**COVID-19 Response**