

24 August 2020

Paul Roberts

By email: fyi-request-13372-b4b4c239@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202005467

Dear Paul Roberts

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 23 July 2020 for:

- “1. Would you please tell us what number of people diagnosed with Covid-19 received treatment that made use of a ventilator?*
- 2. How many of those patients at (1) died?*
- 3. What evidence does the Ministry/Government have that proves SARS-CoV-2/2019-nCoV even exists which meets the accepted standard requiring fulfillment of Koch’s postulates?*
- 4. What compensation and amount has the Ministry/Government paid to these private hospitals for remaining empty during the Lockdown period?”*

I will respond to your questions in turn.

- 1. Would you please tell us what number of people diagnosed with Covid-19 received treatment that made use of a ventilator?*

As at 9:00 am on 10 August 2020, in New Zealand there have been five cases where the use of a ventilator has been required for someone with COVID-19. This data has been sourced from EpiSurv, the national notifiable disease surveillance database operated by ESR on behalf of the Ministry of Health (the Ministry).

- 2. How many of those patients at (1) died?*

Of the five people with COVID-19 mentioned in response to part one of your request, two of these people died.

- 3. What evidence does the Ministry/Government have that proves SARS-CoV-2/2019-nCoV even exists which meets the accepted standard requiring fulfillment of Koch’s postulates?*

There have been no scientists within New Zealand that have been able to establish that COVID-19 has met Koch’s postulates. This is because there are risks and a lead in time for postulates three and four. However, Koch’s postulates have been achieved globally to establish that the

SARS-CoV-2 virus causes the disease. International evidence shows a documented emergence of a new disease from a region in China that has now spread across the globe.

Animal studies (primate) show that inoculation of the virus into animals produces disease. Epidemiological evidence shows that the pathogen spreads from person to person with close contact and that spread can be halted by physical distancing and infection control procedures. People who recover from SARS infection have highly specific antibodies to the virus that cannot be found in those who have not been exposed to the virus.

In New Zealand we have a highly specific test that has detected cases whose clinical syndrome matches those described in the international literature.

Please be advised that Koch's postulates have limitations, particularly when considering viral diseases. For example, many viruses do not cause illness in all infected individuals, which is a requirement of postulate one. Science has evolved since 1890 and we now have DNA studies that can now map the evolution of the pandemic from the source in China.

4. What compensation and amount has the Ministry/Government paid to these private hospitals for remaining empty during the Lockdown period?"

New Zealand's COVID-19 response has focussed both on the immediate response and preparing for the future, including the possibility of a significant increase in the number of cases throughout the country. Within the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) Foundational Package announced on 29 May 2020, the Government provided funding for maintaining the capacity, capability, resources and staff of private hospitals to support the COVID-19 response. Funding of up to \$27.1 million was allocated for a specific set of direct costs incurred. Further information on the CRRF package can be found on page 15 at the following address: <https://treasury.govt.nz/system/files/2020-05/b20-sum-initiatives-crrf.pdf>.

Contracting for this initiative has now been completed between the Ministry and the member organisations of the New Zealand Private Surgical Hospitals Association, with any other financial contributions (such as the Government's wage subsidy) being deducted from funding calculations. The final amount to be paid from the CRRF has been confirmed at \$19.4 million and is subject to additional auditing requirements.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

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

Yours sincerely



Jane Kelley
Director
COVID-19 Health System Response