



26 March 2021

Tara Jackson

By email: fyi-request-14719-689f360b@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Tara

We refer to your information requests dated 18 February 2021 and 11 March 2021 made under the Official Information Act (Act).

We note that on 18 March 2021, we extended the time limit by which we must make a decision on your request of 18 February 2021, to 29 March 2021.

You have asked for:

- a copy of the approved Animal Ethics Committee application for the thesis titled “Stereological Analysis of the Normal Red Nucleus, and the Effect of Delayed Treatment with Adult-Sourced Adiposederived Mesenchymal Stem Cells on Neonatal Hypoxic-Ischemic Brain Injury and Motor Skills, in the rat” by Benjamin Emoefe Aghoghovwia;
- a copy of the Animal Ethics Committee’s final decision (that specifies the conditions etc.) on the use of animals in the above-named student’s thesis; and
- a copy of the minutes of any decision making around this application.

We have decided to grant your requests, subject to the following conditions:

1. Having given careful attention to public interest considerations in accordance with section 9(1) of the Act, we consider it necessary to make redactions to parts of the application where there are good reasons for withholding certain information. We consider that these redactions are necessary to:
 - protect employees and students of the University from improper pressure or harassment, consistent with section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act. These redactions include the names and other identifying details of the principal investigators and researchers;
 - prevent the disclosure or use of official information for improper gain or improper advantage, consistent with section 9(2)(k) of the Act. The thesis is currently embargoed as the research relating to the thesis has not yet been published. If information relating to the research data were to be disclosed before the findings have been published, this would enable third party researchers to obtain that data and provide them with research benefits without the need to invest the same amount of resources in obtaining it; and
 - protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence, and where releasing that information is likely to damage the public interest. This is consistent with section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act. The University owes an obligation of confidence to its researchers – it is inherent in the university-researcher relationship that a university will keep a researcher’s work confidential. There is public interest in promoting and

protecting university research. Releasing the information would damage this public interest in the following ways:

- its release could destabilise the existing research environment at universities, where there is an universal expectation that a university will keep research confidential;
- there is an expectation that researchers would be able to analyse, present and publish their own work. Disclosure of “live” research data, before the findings have been published, would compromise the researchers’ efforts in this regard; and
- third party researchers could obtain the data and this could undermine the efforts of the researchers and potentially jeopardise their careers.

We note that withholding this information is not outweighed by any countervailing public interest considerations which may favour its release. The research has received approval from the Animal Ethics Committee, under a Ministry of Primary Industries approved Code of Ethical Conduct. This committee is made up of independent members.

2. In relation to the minutes that you have requested, we will provide you with an excerpt of the minutes that is relevant to the application you have referred to in your requests. We will not disclose other non-related information contained in these minutes.
3. Pursuant to sections 16 and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act, we have determined it is appropriate to provide you with an opportunity to inspect the information you have requested at our offices, at a location that suits you (in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington or Auckland). We decline to provide a copy of the information directly, as your request specifically refers to an individual researcher, and this may also lead to identification of other associated researchers on this project. The decision to allow for inspection is intended to prevent possible harassment of individuals.

Please confirm whether you are happy for us to contact you directly to make arrangements for you to inspect the information.

If you are not satisfied with our response to your information request, section 28(3) of the Act provides you with the right to ask an Ombudsman to investigate and review this response. However, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns with you first.

Yours sincerely



Mayhaka Mendis
Manager, Policy and Compliance
Office of the Registrar