

21st October 2021

Michael Vaughan
Private/Individual
Email: fyi-request-16802-906337e6@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Michael

Official Information Act Request for – Covid Treatment Protocols

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 30th September 2021 by way of transfer from the Ministry of Health (ref: H202113000) , you requested the following information:

- 1. What is the Covid-19 treatment protocol for hospitalised cases?**
- 2. Are some DHB's following different treatment protocols from others?**
- 3. Are DHB's free to make decisions about treatments for individuals with Covid-19?**
- 4. To what extent are patients able to participate in decision-making about their treatment programmes?**
- 5. If a patient requests a blood test for Vitamin D and/or the administration of high dosage Vitamin C, are hospital staff able to provide these?**
- 6. Do hospital staff have the right to refuse a patient's request and, if so, is there a process for a patient to appeal the decision?**

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 8,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 601,490 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

1. What is the Covid-19 treatment protocol for hospitalised cases?

In relation to the clinical treatment of a patient admitted with Covid-19, we treat every Emergency Department patient according to the symptoms they present with and have an individual care plan for each patient.

CM Health follows guidance from the Ministry of Health as per the publicly available information at the below links. This guideline covers patient severity, investigations, respiratory support, medication management and discharge planning for the clinical management of COVID-19 hospitalised adults.

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/covid-19-advice-all-health-professionals#adult-management>
- https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/interim_guidance_-_clinical_management_of_covid-19_in_hospitalised_adults.pdf

2. Are some DHB's following different treatment protocols from others?

We cannot comment on what protocols other DHBs are using.

3. Are DHB's free to make decisions about treatments for individuals with Covid-19?

The clinician treating the patient is responsible for their treatment pathway. The Ministry of Health guidance and factsheets linked above in question one are to support health professionals managing COVID-19.

4. To what extent are patients able to participate in decision-making about their treatment programmes?

Patients are always encouraged to participate in decision making around their treatment. We follow the Health and Disability Commission (HDC) code of rights, including Right 6 italicised below obtained from the HDC website.

- <https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/code-of-health-and-disability-services-consumers-rights/>

“Right 6 - Right to be fully informed

(1) Every consumer has the right to the information that a reasonable consumer, in that consumer's circumstances, would expect to receive, including—

- (a) an explanation of his or her condition; and*
- (b) an explanation of the options available, including an assessment of the expected risks, side effects, benefits, and costs of each option; and*
- (c) advice of the estimated time within which the services will be provided; and*
- (d) notification of any proposed participation in teaching or research, including whether the research requires and has received ethical approval; and*
- (e) any other information required by legal, professional, ethical, and other relevant standards; and*
- (f) the results of tests; and*
- (g) the results of procedures.*

(2) Before making a choice or giving consent, every consumer has the right to the information that a reasonable consumer, in that consumer's circumstances, needs to make an informed choice or give informed consent.

(3) Every consumer has the right to honest and accurate answers to questions relating to services, including questions about—

- (a) the identity and qualifications of the provider; and*
- (b) the recommendation of the provider; and*
- (c) how to obtain an opinion from another provider; and*
- (d) the results of research.*

(4) Every consumer has the right to receive, on request, a written summary of information provided.”

5. If a patient requests a blood test for Vitamin D and/or the administration of high dosage Vitamin C, are hospital staff able to provide these?

Each patient's treatment plan is tailored to fit their clinical requirements and clinicians provide treatment as clinically indicated. If the clinical view is that Vitamin D and/or the administration of high dosage Vitamin C will not benefit the patient and is not clinically required for the patient, they are not required to provide it.

6. Do hospital staff have the right to refuse a patient's request and, if so, is there a process for a patient to appeal the decision?

Patients are able to request a second opinion and this is facilitated where possible. Clinical staff discuss treatment options and pathways with all patients. If the patient does not agree with treatment plans, they have the right to obtain an opinion from another provider.

I trust this information answers your request. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Fepulea'i Margie Apa', written in a cursive style.

Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health