MINISTRY OF HEALTH
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Chris McCashin

By email: fyi-request-16822-fb2c795f@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202112817

Tēnā koe Chris

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 21 September 2021 for:

> *Can the Ministry of Health please provide the following urgently:*
> *All advice papers (including assessment of compliance with the NZ Bill of Rights Act) to the Minister on the Covid Public Health Response Vaccination Order (this is still outstanding despite repeated requests) and*

Cabinet papers and minutes relating to the COVID-19 vaccination programme are proactively released on the Ministry's website. The papers can be found at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/release-ministerial-decision-making-documents/covid-19-immunisation-programme-cabinet-papers-and-minutes. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information is publicly available.

> *the Cabinet advice and decision to approve the use of the Pfizervax for children 12 and older despite the insignificant risk of Covid for children and the many outstanding concerns about its short and long term safety, efficacy, integrity and effectiveness against the Delta and other strains*

The Cabinet paper *Decision to use the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine for children aged 12 to 15 years* is set to be proactively released shortly on the Ministry website. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act, as the information is soon to be made publicly available.

> *Provide all of the board/persons involved in who approved this vaccine for 12-15 year olds*

This part of your request is withheld in full under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act, to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of such Ministers, members of organisations and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

However, I can advise that Medsafe, New Zealand's Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority, is the independent regulator of pharmaceuticals in this country. It is headed by Chris James, Group Manager Medsafe, who was responsible, under delegated authority for the pharmaceutical approval for use of the Pfizer Comirnaty vaccine in New Zealand. This is outlined in the *Gazette* notice available at: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/Comirnaty-Gazette-Jun-2021.pdf. Whilst Medsafe is a business unit of the Ministry, which is headed by

the Director-General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield, it makes its decisions and recommendations independently.

> *Ashley Bloomfield has stated he requires a 90% vaccination rate. Given the number of adverse reactions to date across all age groups 45,331 I would estimate there will be 200,000 plus reactions and already 40 deaths in New Zealand. Can the Ministry of Health provide the Cost/Benefit analysis of this vaccine when virus deaths are so low in New Zealand.*

Your request for a cost benefit analysis is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist. I'd like to address the estimates of adverse reactions and deaths that you have included in your questions. At this time, there has been one death linked to side effects from the Pfizer vaccine in New Zealand. This case is currently with the Coroner to determine the cause of death.

Both Medsafe and the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM) at the University of Otago, which undertakes pharmacovigilance in New Zealand under contract to the Ministry, encourages everyone to report any adverse effects following vaccination (AEFI). The form to do so is available at: https://report.vaccine.covid19.govt.nz/s/ and anyone – a health professional, government department, district health board or member of the public – can report an AEFI.

Up to and including 2 October 2021, a total of 86 deaths were reported to CARM after the administration of the Comirnaty vaccine. Following medical assessments by CARM and Medsafe it has been determined that:

- 31 of these deaths are unlikely related to the COVID-19 vaccine
- 26 deaths could not be assessed due to insufficient information
- 28 cases are still under investigation.
- 1 death was likely due to vaccine induced myocarditis (as noted above, this is awaiting Coroner's determination)

By chance, some people will experience new illnesses or die from a pre-existing condition shortly after vaccination, especially if they are elderly. Therefore, part of the review process by Medsafe and CARM includes comparing natural death rates to observed death rates following vaccination, to determine if there are any specific trends or patterns that might indicate a vaccine safety concern.

To date, the observed number of deaths reported after vaccination is actually less than the expected number of natural deaths. Detailed CARM reports are published every Wednesday at: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-report-overview.asp.

> *Can you also provide the number of doctors that have been censured for highlighting these risks which can now not be ignored and provide formal apologies to these doctors*
> *The following article also outlines that Covid-19 in India an area densely populated with 265,000,000 people is mostly free from Covid with the usage of Ivermectin. Can you provide the number of doctors who have attempted to sponsor Ivermectin products and if the Ministry of Health has dismissed these and for what reasons?*

The Ministry does not censure or dismiss doctors. The Medical Council of New Zealand registers medical practitioners and is responsible for setting standards for the way our doctors practise medicine. The Council can be contacted at: www.mcnz.org.nz/about-us/contact-us/.

"Can the Ministry of Health provide all links to discussions of therapeutics in any briefing meeting whether in a private or public setting and minutes associated. It appears therapeutics could end this pandemic in New Zealand yet everyone is complicit in destroying the physical and mental health of people with lockdowns and experimental drugs. Why is this being overlooked?

The Minutes of 1 October meeting with Vaccine Ministers is withheld in full under:

- Section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act, to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information; and
- Section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

Vaccination is the most efficient way to end the pandemic. Getting vaccinated is the best way for New Zealanders to protect themselves, their whānau and communities from COVID-19. The vaccine helps prevent you from getting infected and having COVID-19 symptoms, or severe illness. This means you could have no COVID-19 symptoms or will have much fewer, milder symptoms and recover faster.
For patients who are hospitalised with serious cases of COVID-19, there is currently one Medsafe approved medication which is dexamethasone. It is an anti-inflammatory medication that is indicated in the treatment of COVID-19 for patients who require supplemental oxygen therapy. You can find the Medsafe datasheet for the approved medicine here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/d/Dexmethsonetab.pdf.

Most people who develop COVID-19 will recover fully while isolating at home or in managed isolation and quarantine and they do not require hospitalisation. Supportive treatment with fluid, rest, and antifever medication is useful in aiding recovery and can be successfully managed by a general practitioner (GP). A GP is best placed to provide care for those who are recovering from COVID-19 at home, as they are familiar with underlying conditions that may impact recovery and can manage these appropriately.

Medical practitioners are permitted to use any medicine for a particular patient in their care at their discretion; however, unapproved medicines have not been evaluated by Medsafe for safety and efficacy. If a healthcare professional chooses to prescribe other agents to treat a patient with COVID-19 it is their responsibility to ensure they are aware of any safety issues and that they communicate both the risks and benefits to their patients. See www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/medicine-approval-process.asp

The Ministry is aware that therapeutics will have a role to play in managing the pandemic for people who are not vaccinated. Medicines and other ways to treat and manage patients who have COVID-19 are being continually developed and researched. You can find more information on COVID-19 treatments at: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19

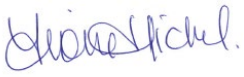
"If therapeutics are not being mentioned has the government been bought off by Pfizer - can Ashley please answer that?

Medsafe approves medicines and vaccines under a delegation from the Director General of Health. This decision-making is in accordance with the processes and considerations set out in the Medicines Act 1981.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Fiona Michel
Acting National Director
COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunisation Programme