

28 August 2014

C Townsend<fyi-request-1837-62149d84@requests.fyi.org.nz>

Dear C Townsend

Official Information Act Request: Treatment costs related to alcohol and cannabis issues

This letter is in response to your request to the Ministry of Health, dated 24 July 2014, regarding "treatment costs relating to alcoholics and alcohol related injuries/disease as compared to cannabis and cannabis related diseases".

I regret to advise you that this information is not available.

While individual patient management notes show who is being treated for alcohol related problems and who is being treated for cannabis consumption, this information is not collated at the national level. Such information is also likely to be confused as many people with cannabis related diseases are likely to be consuming alcohol.

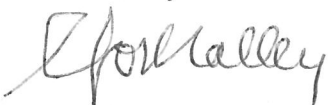
With regard to injury hospitalisations, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) coding system and coding rules that New Zealand conforms with do not allow for good capture of alcohol and drug involvement. Codes do exist for these substances, but the coding guidelines do not support good capture of alcohol and drug involvement in hospitalisations. These have become more conservative in recent versions of the system to the point where very few cases are captured.

While the national data is limited, the majority of these costs are often borne by heavy alcohol and cannabis users and there are a number of surveys which include these type of users, including the Massey University IDMS (frequent drug users including frequent cannabis users) and NZ-ADUM (arrestees who are both heavy alcohol and cannabis users). These reports are publicly available.

We cannot comply with your request under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry does not believe the information is held by individual District Health Boards.

We also regret the delay in providing you with a response by 21 August 2014.

Yours sincerely



Cathy O'Malley
Deputy Director-General
Sector Capability and Implementation