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Chris McCashin

By email: [fyi-request-18841-799b20e6@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-18841-799b20e6@requests.fyi.org.nz)  
Ref: H202203833

Tēnā koe Chris

### **Response to your request for official information**

Thank you for your consolidated requests under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 11 March 2022. I will respond to each part of your request in turn

*Please provide any and all decision making, reporting, recommendations, correspondence as to why the Ministry of Health is now changing the way Covid-19 deaths are recorded. All of the names and persons involved and the justification for it.*

Three documents have been identified within scope of your request. These are itemised in Appendix 1 to this letter, and copies of the documents are enclosed. Please note that some information has been deemed *out of scope* and removed accordingly.

The Ministry provides details on deaths with COVID-19 (deaths that occur within 28 days of being reported as a case – regardless of the cause of death), and on details on the official cause of the death. The Ministry's clinical criteria for reporting a COVID-19 death will continue to be guided by the World Health Organization's definition for deaths due to COVID-19.

*As I understand it the deaths will be broken into three categories. Those where it is clear that Covid-19 was the cause of death Those who had (or were subsequently found to have) Covid-19 when they died, but their cause of death was clearly not Covid-19 related And those whose cause of death was still being investigated – such as it is being reviewed by the Coroner – but it is known that they had Covid-19 when they died. Can you also please provide the vaccine deaths in a similar format. Those where it is clear that the vaccine was the death. Those who had (or were subsequently found to have) had the vaccine when they died, but their cause of death was not vaccine related or there is a question mark (think we are in excess of 2,000 within 21 days of vaccine - can you please provide the COD for these people plus the 137 people who died but it was never the vaccine) And those whose cause of death was still being investigated Ultimately can you provide in a similar format the summary of reported deaths from the vaccine and the observed versus expected deaths within 21 days of vaccine similar to how you will do this for the virus.*

Information relating to your request can be found on Medsafe Safety Report, which is available here: <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/safety-report-41.asp>. Deaths in the report are broken into three categories, not linked to the vaccine, insufficient information at this time; and those where the vaccine is probably associated with the report of death. Please note that death is an outcome and not an adverse reaction. The cause of death is the medical event of which

death was an outcome. This means that the causes of death may have been reported as an AEFI and therefore reflected in the Medsafe Safety reports' AEFI-line listings. Further, identifying which of the reports had death as an outcome is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased natural persons.

Also in scope of your request is the Ministry's observed versus expected (OE) analysis. Tables 7 and 8 of the report referenced above contain this analysis. The 'expected deaths' are the number of deaths expected within this monitoring period based on the average death rates in each age group between 2008 and 2019; and based on a 21-day risk window. Both tables show that within the 21 days after either dose one or dose two of the Comirnaty vaccine, there was no increase in deaths. The data in column 4 (observed deaths in monitoring period) refers to the raw data of the number of deaths observed in the 21 days following vaccination with dose 1 or 2 throughout the observation period. The observation period was between 19 February 2021 and 31 December 2021, throughout which the National Immunisation Programme administered nearly 8 million doses. The data in columns 3 and 4 was used to calculate the relative risk of death in the 21 days following vaccination. There was no statistically significant increased risk of death for any age group found in the analysis.

The Ministry is aware that there is misinformation in the public sphere. To protect yourself against misinformation we encourage you to obtain your information from reputable sources only. The Unite Against COVID-19 and CERT NZ websites hold useful information to help combat prevalence of misinformation. These websites are available at:

- Unite Against COVID-19 at: [www.covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/misinformation-scams-and-online-harm/](http://www.covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/misinformation-scams-and-online-harm/).
- CERT NZ at: [www.cert.govt.nz/individuals/common-threats/covid-19-vaccine-scams/covid-19-vaccine-misinformation/](http://www.cert.govt.nz/individuals/common-threats/covid-19-vaccine-scams/covid-19-vaccine-misinformation/).

*Can you please also provide all of the people that have died from Covid-19 since the vaccine roll out and provide their vaccination status. As a scenario can the MOH please consider the following. Pfizers latest report stated 4.6% of people that obtained the vaccine as a serious side effect developed Covid-19.*

It is important to note that COVID-19 is not a reported side effect of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. While the vaccine largely protects against the serious effects of COVID-19, the virus can still be caught by people who are vaccinated against COVID-19.

The information requested in this part is publicly available on the Ministry's website at: [www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-case-demographics](http://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-case-demographics).

*How does the Ministry of Health determine how the person transmitted the virus? For example, any unlinked cases, are these in vaccinated given Covid is a vaccine side effect.*

As above, COVID-19 is not a reported side effect of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. The information requested in this part is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, on the grounds that the information does not exist. The Ministry does not undertake contact tracing measures to determine how someone contracted COVID-19 during Phase 3 of the Omicron response. In any event, it is never possible to categorically determine how COVID-19 is acquired.

*The Medsafe reports also state that there was not enough information to assess 64 deaths from the vaccine. What is the cause of death and where are these deaths being recorded?*

Reports of death sent to CARM are recorded in the CARM database, which is why they are reflected in the Medsafe Safety reports. At the time of sending the report the reporter often does not know the cause of death. It is important to note that there is a delay in obtaining a confirmation on the cause of death of these reports. The cause of death is the medical event(s) that resulted in the death of the individual and is determined by the Coroner, if the case is under coronial jurisdiction, or by the medical professionals involved in the care of the patient. The Programme, Medsafe, and CARM have a robust process for obtaining these documents when possible, and are continuing to obtain documents on the legal cause of death of these reports. Reports where the cause of death has been obtained are assessed by a medical assessor at CARM and by the COVID-19 Vaccine Independent Safety Monitoring Board and this finding is reflected in the Medsafe report. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

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](mailto: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 of Health website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases).

Nāku noa, nā



Kristen Davison  
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**COVID-19 Health System Response**

## Appendix 1: List of documents for release

#	Date	Document details	Decision on release
1	27 January 2022	Memo: Adapting COVID-19 Surveillance, Intelligence and Contact Tracing Reporting and Data Management for Omicron.	Released with information deemed out of scope excluded.
2	15 February 2022	Memo: COVID-19 Reporting: Phase 2 of the Omicron Strategy	
3	18 March 2022	Memo: COVID-19 Hospitalisation Rate and Mortality Data	