

16 August 2023

Renoh Chalakkal
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Tēnā koe Renoh,

Official information request HN200023961

Thank you for your email on 28 June 2023, asking for the following which has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- 1. How many DHBs/specialists in ophthalmology used a teleophthalmology (telemedicine specific to ophthalmology) mode of consult during and after the covid-19 pandemic?*
- 2. What were the major telemedicine portals used by the DHBs in New Zealand for virtual consults in the ophthalmology specialty, and who is responsible for procurement/management of these portals?*
- 3. Are there any established teleophthalmology pathways followed by the specialists practicing under Te Whatu Ora hospitals/DHBs/clinics?*
- 4. Do Health NZ/DHBs/Hospitals keep track of the number of virtual consultations done pre-/post-Covid using telemedicine for ophthalmology referrals? If so, what are the numbers/stats for these, and who is responsible for managing this data?*
- 5. How many DHBs/hospitals under Health NZ have an established pathway for conducting remote virtual telemedicine consultations in ophthalmology specialization? Can we have the names/details of these DHBs/hospitals?*
- 6. How many DHBs/hospitals under Health NZ currently accept tele-referrals from GPs/optometrists for:
a. Urgent referrals
b. Semi-urgent referrals
b. Routine referrals
Can we have the numbers/names/details of these DHBs/hospitals?*
- 7. Are there any studies conducted by Health NZ researchers/experts to understand the workflows and practices of staff working and patients enrolled in GP/optometry practices with already established teleophthalmology pathways?*
- 8. Are there any studies conducted by Health NZ to understand technical, logistical, and human factors affecting the implementation of telemedicine followed in ophthalmology in the NZ health setting?*
- 9. Have the telemedicine practice addressed the equity and accessibility issue of specialist ophthalmology referrals in New Zealand? Any data pertaining to this would be appreciated.*
- 10. Are there any set regulations followed by Health NZ to review/regulate the telemedicine consultations/practice followed by various clinics/hospitals under Health NZ? Especially for the ophthalmology specialty.*

11. How many GP practices/private optometrist practices are currently eligible to refer patients to eye specialists practicing in Health NZ hospitals? Can we have the names/details of these DHBs/hospitals?

12. What are the cybersecurity clearances/certifications/tests needed for a telemedicine platform to be able to be successfully integrated into a Health NZ referral/treatment portal?

Please see below a response to your request.

4. Do Health NZ/DHBs/Hospitals keep track of the number of virtual consultations done pre-/post-Covid using telemedicine for ophthalmology referrals? If so, what are the numbers/stats for these, and who is responsible for managing this data?

While not referrals specifically, we can identify the number of outpatient attendances done virtually in the Ophthalmology specialty. Outpatient data is reported to National Non-admitted Patient Collection (NNPAC), and the mode of delivery code allows us to identify those done by telephone or video.

Ophthalmology telehealth appointments by financial year

The total number of records from NNPAC with an inter district flow (IDF) unit of measure of "Event", and the number that were telehealth (Mode of delivery = telephone or video) were:

2018/19 = 950

2019/20 = 5,750

2020/21 = 6,681

2021/22 = 10,240

This data relates to outpatient events reported to NNPAC with an Ophthalmology specialty code (S40).

12. What are the cybersecurity clearances/certifications/tests needed for a telemedicine platform to be able to be successfully integrated into a Health NZ referral/treatment portal?

The implementation of security controls varies depending on the sensitivity of the data. However, when dealing with personally identifiable information (PII) or protected health information (PHI), all systems and services handling such sensitive information must undergo a cyber certification and accreditation process before receiving approval to operate. The assessment of security risks aligns with both the Health Information Security Framework (HISF) and the New Zealand Information Security Manual (NZISM), which are standard government frameworks. Among the controls typically evaluated are encryption at rest and in transit, multifactor authentication (MFA), general access management, data sovereignty, and backup, to name a few. It is advisable to implement controls described in these frameworks based on the sensitivity of the information, as this will determine whether they are categorized as "Must have" or "Should have" controls.

In order to provide responses for the remaining questions, Te Whatu Ora would need to divert personnel from their other core duties and allocate extra time to complete this task. The diversion of these resources would impact Te Whatu Ora's ability to carry out our other core functions. As such, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as it requires substantial collation.

I have considered whether fixing a charge for the supply of the information or extending the timeframe for response would enable Te Whatu Ora to respond. I do not consider that either option would remove the impact that supplying the information would have on our other operations.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at hnzOIA@health.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Te Whatu Ora may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Michael Cleary
Acting OIA Manager
Government Services