MINISTRY OF HEALTH
MANATŪ HAUORA

15 FEB 2016

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Mr Iain Forsyth
Address: Iain Forsyth <fyi-request-3539-fb9ae611@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: H201600118

Dear Mr Forsyth

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request of 12 January 2016 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for:

1. How many requests has the Ministry of Health/Minister Dunne received for medicinal cannabis?
2. How many requests were approved by the Ministry of Health/Minister Dunne?
3. Has there or will be there a feasibility study conducted into the benefits and disadvantages of changing the process of obtaining medicinal cannabis from requiring ministerial approval, to alternative options, such as approval by doctors/healthcare professionals?

The information relating to this request is itemised below.

Request	Response
1. How many requests has the Ministry of Health/Minister Dunne received for medicinal cannabis?	1. As of 27 January 2016, 120 applications from clinicians to prescribe medicinal cannabis have been received by the Ministry of Health. 24 of these are re-applications for existing patients
2. How many requests were approved by the Ministry of Health/Minister Dunne?	2. 105 applications have been granted by the Ministry of Health including one by the Associate Minister of Health. 5 applications are in progress 10 applications were not granted: 1 was incomplete 4 were withdrawn 2 were cancelled 3 declined

Request 3: Has there or will be there a feasibility study conducted into the benefits and disadvantages of changing the process of obtaining medicinal cannabis from requiring ministerial approval, to alternative options, such as approval by doctors/healthcare professionals?

Response
The Ministry of Health has a review of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1977 (the Regulations) on its work programme for 2016.

Regulation 22 of the Regulations requires a prescriber to obtain Ministerial approval prior to issuing a patient with a prescription for certain controlled drugs. This Regulation covers both pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical grade cannabis products. While feedback from the sector to date has not identified concerns with Regulation 22 that indicate regulatory amendment is necessary, it will be reviewed as part of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations Review.

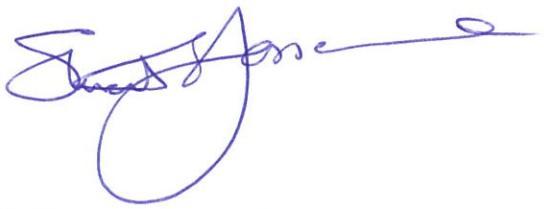
Ministerial approval of prescriptions has been delegated to the Manager Medicines Control, except when the application to prescribe is outside current government policy, for example, a non-pharmaceutical grade cannabis product.

The Ministry is currently reviewing the processing of applications for approval to prescribe Sativex. Sativex, a Class B1 controlled drug and the only approved cannabinoid medicine available in NZ, is covered by Regulation 22. Prescribers must apply for approval to prescribe Sativex on a case-by-case basis.

The review will examine all aspects of the Sativex approval process to ensure that the requirements in place for applications to prescribe Sativex for both the approved condition (spasticity in multiple sclerosis) and unapproved conditions are appropriate. The review aims to ensure that the approval process is as efficient as possible and appropriately aligns with the process used for other medicines affected by Regulation 22.

I trust this information fulfils your request.

Yours sincerely



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