

21 April 2016

Mr Gregory Soar
fyi-request-3811-6fe3e395@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: H201601121

Dear Mr Soar

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request of 24 March 2016 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA Act). You requested information regarding:

- what training is given to our medical profession in relation to cannabis medicines and treatments
- if there is no such training in place, why is there not and what plans are there to rectify such an omission in our health system?

Under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act), the Medical Council of New Zealand (Medical Council) is the responsible authority for the safe practise of medical practitioners and prescribes the qualifications for medical training.

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) is not involved in determining how medical practitioners are trained to prescribe cannabis-based medicines, and has no plans to. Therefore, I am refusing your request for this information under section 18(g) of the OIA Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds for believing that this information is held by another government department or more closely connected with the functions of another government department.

There is no omission in the New Zealand system in response to your second question. In New Zealand the medical schools provide medical education to meet the practice standards required by the Medical Council. Medical education includes training to work as a prescriber. Medical practitioners who are authorised to prescribe medicines, such as cannabis-based medicines, are regulated under the HCPA Act, which requires registered medical practitioners to hold a practising certificate from the Medical Council.

The Medical Council recognises and accredits the specialist medical colleges to train and provide guidance to specialist medical practitioners. You may be interested to know that the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists have released a statement about prescribing cannabis-based medicines to patients¹.

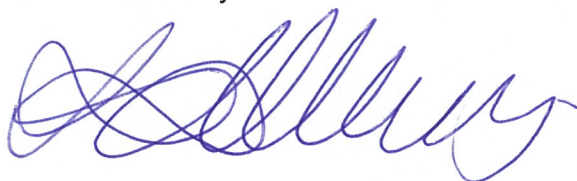
¹ <http://anzca.edu.au/Documents/FPM-Cannabinoids-April-2015.pdf>

If a patient's medical specialist considers it clinically appropriate to prescribe a cannabis-based medicine, then Ministerial approval is required for the prescription. The Ministry has published guidance on how to obtain approval for prescriptions for cannabis-based medicines on its website (www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/medicines-control/medicinal-cannabis). Note that the criteria require that an application to prescribe cannabis-based medicines should be from a specialist in an appropriate medical specialty, or, in the case of Sativex², a general practitioner on the recommendation of a specialist. This means that only medical practitioners can prescribe cannabis-based medicines.

If you are aware of any unsafe prescribing practice, you are advised to notify the Medical Council, which must consider any such notification about a health practitioner and take appropriate action to ensure public safety.

I trust this information fulfils your request.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Gully
Acting Chief People and Transformation Officer
People and Transformation

² The only cannabis-based medicine currently available and approved for use in New Zealand under the Medicines Act 1981

Appendix 1: Mr Gregory Soar's Official Information Act 1982 Request

From: Gregory Soar <fyi-request-3811-6fe3e395@requests.fyi.org.nz>

To: OIA requests at MOH <oiagr@moh.govt.nz>,

Date: 24/03/2016 06:27 a.m.

Subject: Official Information Act request - Cannabis Related Medical Training

Dear Ministry of Health,

As a patient being successfully treated with a cannabis based medicine and finding most doctors lacking in knowledge re cannabis itself and cannabis derived drugs I wonder how those already authorised to script under current law have been trained. I also wonder how future training in this area is being catered for. With this in mind I wish to know the following please:

1. As we have legal cannabis for medical purposes currently able to be scripted (doctors dentists and midwives under current law) what training is given to our medical profession in relation to cannabis medicines and treatments.. A brief outline please?
2. If there is no such training in place why is there not and what plans are there to rectify such an omission in our health system?

It seems to me that our medical professionals who are scripting cannabis derived treatments may have little if any formal training and therefore how would we be assured of best care.

Yours faithfully,

Gregory Soar

This is an OIA request done via the FYI website.

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