

22 August 2017

David Lawson
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Dear Mr Lawson

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your request of 3 August 2017, asking two questions under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) as follows:

I refer you to the ACC Read Code N12C2 Lumbar disc prolapse with radiculopathy which provides cover for both the prolapse disc and also the radicular sciatic symptoms that travel down an injured persons sciatic pathway from from [sic] the spine right through to the foot.

OIA Request:

I respectfully request your assistance in confirming the best ACC Read Code/s that reflect the sciatic radiculopathy that is associated solely with either of the following injuries;

- a) entrapment of the sciatic nerve within the musculature of the buttock caused through injury to said musculature, that does not have an associated lesion to the sciatic nerve itself, but the sciatic being caused by the irritation of the sciatic nerve transversing through the musculature.*
- b) injury or lesion to the sciatic nerve in the buttock/thigh region caused through accidental trauma.*

I have located the Read Code of N143. Sciatica, however I am unsure whether there is a more specific Read Code that covers irritation of, or the lesion of, the sciatic nerve in the buttock/hip/thigh caused by accidental trauma, which goes on to cause radicular sciatic symptoms further down the injured persons limb.

Our response

Read code decisions

As alluded to in our recent letter dated 3 August 2017, it is important to bear in mind that the Read codes are normally allocated by a health care provider at time of lodgement of a claim with ACC.

In addition, as outlined in our letter of 13 June 2017, under the Act a distinction exists between a request for information already known and held by an agency, verses a request for an agency to form an opinion or provide an explanation of comment and thus create new information to answer a request.

With this in mind, we are not able to advise you which code would be deemed most appropriate in the specific hypothetical injury scenarios detailed in a) and b) above. Your request requires ACC to form an opinion and determine Read codes for a given situation rather than requesting information held by ACC. This decision complies with our obligations under the Act.

The most appropriate way to ascertain the best Read code for a particular injury is when all details are recorded by the health care provider and a claim is lodged and accepted by ACC. The Read codes specific to an individual's situation would either have already been provided upon claim lodgement by that health care provider or be determined or adjusted when further information became available.

We are able to provide you the following Read codes which, in conjunction with the Read codes you have previously been provided, may assist you with selecting a possible Read code for each scenario you describe.

Sciatic Read codes

Read codes that have the key word 'sciatic' (with the exclusion of those related to 'hernia') include:

- SJ601 – Open injury sciatic nerve
- SJ600 – Closed injury sciatic nerve
- SJ60. – Sciatic nerve injury
- N143. – Sciatica (which you mention in your email)
- N1420 – Lumbago with sciatica
- F350. – Sciatic nerve lesion

Radicular Read codes

Three examples of radicular Read codes that do not refer to either a disc prolapse or spondylosis include:

- N242z – Neuralgia, neuritis or radiculitis NOS
- N2422 – Radiculitis, unspecified
- N242. – Neuralgia, neuritis and radiculitis unspecified

In the event that the scenarios and specific injury details you outline relate to a specific client's claim with ACC, rather than a hypothetical situation, upon claim lodgement and acceptance an ACC case manager, or equivalent, would assess the Read code for that client's injury.

Queries or concerns

If you have any questions about the information provided, ACC will be happy to work with you to answer these. You can contact us at GovernmentServices@acc.co.nz or in writing to *Government Engagement and Support, PO Box 242, Wellington 6140.*

You have the right to complain to the Office of the Ombudsman about our decision and response. You can call them on 0800 802 602 between 9am and 5pm on weekdays, or write to *The Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.*

Yours sincerely

OIA Services, Government Engagement and Support