

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

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Jason

Email: fyi-request-6540-ecd64ca0@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Jason

RE Official information request CDHB 9704

I refer to your email dated 12 September 2017 requesting the following information under section 12 of the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB.

1. **How many methadone dispensing errors have been reported by pharmacists in the CDHB region in the last five years?**
 - a. **What was the result of said errors? (Did it result in death, overdose etc.)**

Community pharmacies are required to notify the Christchurch Opioid Recovery Service (CORS) of dispensing errors as stipulated in the New Zealand Practice Guidelines for Opioid Substitution Treatment 2014. Once CORS is notified, the error is recorded on the CDHB incident recording system.

The Canterbury DHB's incident recording system was changed in March 2015, so we are unable to provide data prior to that time that is comparable.

The table below shows the 2015-2017 calendar years methadone dispensing errors and resultant harm.

Year	Count	Injury/ Harm
2015	3	Unconfirmed- 2, No- 1
2016	6	Unconfirmed- 5, No- 1
2017 till Sept	1	No - 1

2. **I would also like any information available about, including reasoning and justification for the policy of diluting methadone takeaways in Canterbury as it appears to be a policy unique to Canterbury and not in line with the rest of New Zealand. I would also like to know why this policy overrides the instructions of doctors who request methadone not to be diluted with water.**

CORS standing procedure is for all methadone doses to be prescribed in a liquid form. It is diluted with 50mls of water and this is written on the prescription form. There is regional variation on the decision to dilute methadone which is referred to in the New Zealand Practice Guidelines for Opioid Substitution Treatment 2014. <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/new-zealand-practice-guidelines-opioid-substitution-treatment-2014>

The rationale for prescribing a liquid form and dilution is to deter diversion of methadone doses. Dilution with water delivers the same active dose of methadone. It means that the volume to be consumed is increased.

Any deviation from this prescribing practice is required to be approved by the CORS Multi-Disciplinary Team and Lead Clinician under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

General Practitioners and medical officers in CORS, who are authorised under the Misuse of Drugs Act are prescribing under the CORS standing procedures. They are not authorised to deviate from the standing procedures.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Gullery', with a long, sweeping underline.

Carolyn Gullery
General Manager
Planning, Funding & Decision Support