



6 June 2024

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Ref: H2024041125

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your follow up request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 8 May 2024 for information regarding Long Covid. Each part of your request is answered below.

If no Government department or agency is currently collating any statistics on Long Covid then how can these statements in your response be carried out/justified:

1) *"The Ministry continues to assess the impact of Long COVID via funded research"*

The Ministry of Health is currently in the process of collating evidence on the impact of Long COVID via the research it has funded.

2) *"In August 2022, the Ministry introduced new clinical codes for long COVID"*

The Ministry has introduced ICD-10 codes for post COVID-19 condition.

3) *"we released the first long COVID guidelines for health professionals, individuals and those caring for people with long COVID"*

The Ministry of Health last updated its Long Covid Programme webpage on 2 April 2024: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/long-covid-programme.

4) *"The Ministry has recently commissioned a number of research projects looking at long COVID"*

The Ministry has currently commissioned two research projects focussed specifically on Long COVID. One project focuses on long term health impact of COVID-19 in Waikato Hospital cohort, and the other focuses on burden of long COVID in New Zealand. Brief overview of these research projects can be found on the Long Covid webpage above.

It is not clear in your response who is funding this work but if it is taxpayers money then I, as a taxpayer, would expect to know that there were statistics coming out of any research.

So my question then is, why is research taking place, government guidelines being released, and new clinical codes being produced for something we do not know how many people are suffering from?

The research will help provide information and insights on determining how many people are suffering from long COVID. It is important to note that in any new and emerging disease, such as long COVID, research plays a critical role in helping us understand how many individuals are/continue to be affected, are likely to suffer from it, and what the nature and scale of interventions needed might be.

Why are these decisions being made without any statistics to justify these actions?

Statistics based on international research help us understand that there is an emerging condition and that it appears to be impacting several individuals. Where the impact appears to be considerable, as it does in the case of long COVID, New Zealand specific data are needed to determine if any and the nature of actions needed.

I trust this information fulfils your request. If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: oiagr@health.govt.nz.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



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