

27 May 2022

Response to a request for official information

Thank you for your request for official information received 22 March 2022 by Nelson Marlborough Health (NMH)¹, followed by the necessary extension of time 14 April 2022, where you seek the following information.

1. ***"Please indicate what is your exact procedure for determining that hospital admissions in this current time are in fact directly due to covid:***

(a) ie: are u testing people who are admitting themselves for something non respiratory related and if they test positive after admission for sars cov 2 are you listing it as a covid admission regardless"

NMH response:

Hospital admissions are tested for COVID-19 by a rapid antigen test (RAT) which detects protein from the virus, or a PCR, which identifies genetic material from the virus.

The primary reason for a patient's admission will be recorded alongside their COVID-19 status.

Patient admissions directly due to COVID-19 are admitted with COVID-19 as the *Primary* cause for hospitalisation. If the primary reason for admission is non-respiratory, and the patient tests positive for COVID-19 straightaway or during the admission, patients are admitted with COVID-19 as *Incidental* to the primary reason for hospitalisation.

(b) "ie: people who are admitted for something respiratory related that is later diagnosed as not sars cov 2, are you indicating them as covid hospitalizations if they return a positive test during admission."

NMH response:

If the primary reason for admission is a respiratory illness, and the patient tests negative for COVID-19, repeat testing is necessary to make sure the early tests are not false negatives. A patient developing a positive test for COVID-19 many days into their hospital stay may have had a long 'incubation' period i.e had COVID-19 since admission, or contracted COVID-19 while in hospital. In the latter case, testing would have revealed the initial cause of their respiratory illness (bacterial or viral).

We note that daily COVID-19 data available in the public domain under the term 'hospitalisations' refers to the number of patients in hospital that day with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, regardless of whether the hospitalisation is *Primary* ("from") COVID-19 or *Incidental* ("with") COVID-19.

¹ Nelson Marlborough District Health Board

This response has been provided under the Official Information Act 1982. You have the right to seek an investigation by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or free phone 0800 802 602. If you have any questions about this decision please feel free to email our OIA Coordinator OIArequest@nmdhb.govt.nz

I trust this information meets your requirements. NMH, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's understanding of how we are delivering publicly-funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released. If you feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lexie O'Shea', is positioned above the typed name and title.

Lexie O'Shea
Chief Executive