

22nd September 2020

[REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for – Telehealth Appointments

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 24th August 2020, you requested the following information:

- **Average number of telehealth appointments conducted at your DHB per week in November 2019 (or another month pre-pandemic)**
- **Average number of telehealth appointments conducted at your DHB per week in April 2020?**
- **Average number of telehealth appointments conducted at your DHB per week in the most recent week you have data for (July/Aug 2020)?**
- **If possible, a breakdown of what kind of appointments these were, ie via phone or video consultation, would be really helpful.**

If you don't collect this kind of data, can you provide me with any information regarding your DHB's use of telehealth before Covid-19, whether this increased during the first lockdown and whether use of telehealth has continued as the country reduced alert levels?

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

As an organisation, CM Health provides over 400,000 outpatient appointments per year across a range of community sites. As a DHB we wish to provide our patients and whaanau with a range of options on how they receive their care. We aim to ensure the services offered to our community are culturally safe, appropriate and meet the needs of our population.

The use of telehealth is to provide patients and their whanaau with alternative options to receiving their care. It may help our population to improve their access to care, give more options on who can participate in their care, offer greater convenience of appointment times and locations.

- **Average number of telehealth appointments conducted at your DHB per week in November 2019 (or another month pre-pandemic)**

The mode of delivery of telehealth appointments was not recorded prior to March 2020 therefore we have no data for November 2019. We are unable to provide a copy to you, under section 18(e) of the Act – as this does not exist.

- **Average number of telehealth appointments conducted at your DHB per week in April 2020?**
- **Average number of telehealth appointments conducted at your DHB per week in the most recent week you have data for (July/Aug 2020)?**
- **If possible, a breakdown of what kind of appointments these were, ie via phone or video consultation, would be really helpful.**

The below table outlines the number of telehealth appointments on average per 7 days in April 2020, the average number of telehealth appointments per week when the data was sourced (31st August 2020) and a breakdown of the mode of appointment.

	Outpatient Appointments			Number of days at Alert Level			
	Telephone	Video	Total	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Average per 7 days April 2020*	2868	116	2984	27	3		
17/08/2020 - 23/08/2020	3137	139	3276		7		
Average per 7 days 27/07/2020 - 23/08/2020	1325	51	1376		11.5		16.5

Table 1 Data Source: Health Intelligence & Informatics 31/08/2020

*includes 3 weekday public holidays

- **If you don't collect this kind of data, can you provide me with any information regarding your DHB's use of telehealth before Covid-19, whether this increased during the first lockdown and whether use of telehealth has continued as the country reduced alert levels?**

Prior to Covid-19 the telehealth focus for the organisation was mostly around staff huddles, team meetings, multidisciplinary teams in the community and trials of clinical outpatient appointments at a satellite area. Our technology teams had an ongoing programme of work to expand telehealth use which was to be implemented over 2020 however in light of the Covid-19 response this work was fast tracked to focus on the delivery of this technology advice and associated change management to enable video consultations.

Returning to National Alert Level 1 the use of telehealth has decreased however CM Health has conducted reviews to collect feedback from both patients and staff regarding their telehealth experiences. We are using this information and working with services to make changes and improvements to continue to offer telehealth to the Counties Manukau community where appropriate.

CM Health will be utilising the Digital Enablement funding announced by the Ministry of Health to support further enablement of telehealth. The use of technology for telehealth continues to evolve.

As a DHB we need to ensure that our patients, whaanau, clinicians and support services have access to the correct processes, technical support, equipment and resources to make the use of telehealth a success. In order to embed and sustain the use of technology the DHB needs to

ensure sufficient education and support is available to effectively engage with our communities and to support the changes in ways of working for our clinicians, administrators and managers.

I trust that this information is helpful. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Fepulea'i Margie Apa', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health