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s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H2022009804

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (Ministry of Health) on 9 August 2022 for information regarding gender-based health care. I will respond to each part of your request in turn.

What is the Ministry of Health's definition of the below words, as used on this web page? Please include the clinical and/or scientific basis for the definition used. Gender, Gender identity, Transgender children, Gender-expansive

The information on the Manatū Hauora website is supported by the Guidelines for Gender Affirming Healthcare for Gender Diverse and Transgender Children, Young People and Adults in Aotearoa New Zealand, which is available here:

researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/13101.

These guidelines were authored in 2018 by a collaboration of people working professionally for transgender health in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is also supported by the Standards of Care developed by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, which can be found here: www.wpath.org/publications/soc.

Does the Ministry of Health believe that all children have a "gender identity"? If so, please set out the clinical and scientific basis for this belief

While the Act allows New Zealanders to ask for information from Ministers and government agencies, there is no requirement for agencies to create new information, compile information they do not hold or provide or prove an opinion. The Act does not support requests where an opinion, comment, argument, or hypothetical statement is put to the Ministry for response, couched as a request for information. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(g) on the grounds that it is not held by Manatū Hauora.

What is the developmental process for a child "figuring out" their gender identity?

What does it mean that a child can be aware of their gender identity from an early age and how is this different from a child being aware of their biological sex?

*What are the professional clinical qualifications of the people who wrote the content for this web page, if the content was provided by a source external to the Ministry of Health please provide the source and their clinical qualifications
When was the content on this webpage last reviewed and what were the clinical qualifications of the person undertaking this review?*

Regarding the statement that “Blockers are a safe and fully reversible medicine that may be used from early puberty through to later adolescence to help ease distress and allow time to fully explore gender health options.” Does the Ministry still stand by the claim that puberty blockers are safe and fully reversible? If so, why?

It is important to note that Manatū Hauora intends to only provide general health advice on its website. Treating clinicians are responsible for considering the appropriateness of a particular treatment for an individual patient.

It is the attending clinician's responsibility to ensure patients are informed of the risks and benefits of treatment and understand them. Informed consent should be obtained from the patient before the choice is made to prescribe a treatment. It is the responsibility of the treating clinician to ensure that there is a determination of whether the individual is capable of giving informed consent. The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights establishes the rights of all patients to be fully informed, to make an informed choice, and to give informed consent. The Code notes that every consumer must be presumed competent to make an informed choice and give informed consent, unless there are reasonable grounds for believing that the consumer is not competent. The Code is publicly available at:

<https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/>

Section 36 of the Care of Children Act 2004 outlines requirements for a child's consent to medical treatment or procedure. Please refer to the Care of Children Act 2004 for consent to medical procedures generally:

www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2004/0090/latest/DLM317233.html.

Is the Ministry aware of the recent interim findings of the Cass review that puberty blockers are not well evidenced and that the long term health consequences are unknown? If so, on what date did the Ministry become aware of this and what action was taken?

Is the Ministry aware that the US Food and Drug Administration recently placed warning on puberty blockers after some female children prescribed blockers subsequently suffered from tumour-like masses on the brain, visual disturbances, swelling of the optic nerve, eye paralysis, and increased blood pressure, among other symptoms? If so, on what date did the Ministry become aware of this and what action was taken?

Given these recent developments, are the claims on this web page under active review with the intention to revise the claims that puberty blockers are safe and fully reversible? If not, why not?

What if, any organisations or individuals external to the Ministry of Health have been included in, or consulted on, the content on this webpage? If any individuals have been involved please do not disclose their name, instead please disclose their professional qualifications and reason for involvement.”

Medsafe is the authority responsible for the regulation of medicines in New Zealand, this includes making sure medicines meet safety, quality and performance standards and monitoring reactions to medicines. Lucrin is one puberty blocker that is used to treat precocious (unusually early) puberty in children.

The data sheet for Lucrin contains the following information: Pseudotumor cerebri/idiopathic intracranial hypertension Pseudotumor cerebri (PTC) / idiopathic intracranial hypertension has been reported in paediatric patients receiving leuprorelin acetate. Monitor patients for signs and symptoms of PTC, including headache, papilloedema, blurred vision, diplopia, loss of vision, pain behind the eye or pain with eye movement, tinnitus, dizziness, and nausea. Refer the patient to an ophthalmologist to confirm the presence of papilloedema. If PTC is confirmed, treat the patient in accordance with the established treatment guidelines and permanently discontinue use of leuprorelin acetate.

The medicine information summary for leuprorelin is available at:

medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet//LucrinDepot1-month3month6monthDUALinj.pdf and medsafe.govt.nz/consumers/cmi//lucrin-pds.pdf.

If at any time a medicine you are taking is causing a side effect, it is recommended you seek medical advice early so that appropriate action can be taken. You or your health care provider may wish to report the side effect to the New Zealand Centre for Adverse Reaction Monitoring (CARM). Visit the CARM website at <https://nzphvc.otago.ac.nz> for more information.

Manatū Hauora is in the process of revising its webpage in a way that acknowledges the current limits of available evidence. Additionally, work on an evidence brief is planned to support this over the next few months. Updated information will be found on the Manatū Hauora website in the future at: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/transgender-new-zealanders/transgender-new-zealanders-children-and-young-people.

Our approach to the provision of gender affirming health care will continue to be guided by health professionals and Rainbow communities, including the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care Version 8 (SOC8), which is expected to be released in the first quarter of 2022. These updated guidelines will provide updated assessment, support, and therapeutic approaches for transgender and gender diverse people. The SOC8 will inform practice internationally and here in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

It is important that health services meet the needs of all New Zealanders, with inclusiveness and dignity for all. We are committed to providing better access, support and treatment for rainbow communities through our health system and ensuring the system is responsive to the needs of transgender, intersex, and gender-diverse people.

I trust this information fulfils your request. 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 Hauorā website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Dr Joe Borne
Chief Medical Officer