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20 December 2022

**s 9(2)(a)**

By email: **s 9(2)(a)**  
Ref: H2022017053

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 (the Ministry of Health) on 16 November 2022 for information regarding COVID-19 vaccine advertising. On 17 November 2022 this part of your request was transferred to Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand):

*"Please provide under the OIA information to show who drafted the advertisement and who authorised it and the cost of publishing this advertisement.  
Please also provide information to show all other newspapers and publications with similar advertising in February or March 2021 and the dates and cost of each."*

You can expect a response from Te Whatu Ora in due course. Please find a response to the remainder of your request below:

*"Please include information to show what if any assessment was done to verify the accuracy of claims in this advertisement including that "it's safe", "it has been approved by our own Medsafe experts" "it's also already been used successfully by millions of people, and by thousands here in New Zealand too" "it's effective", the Pfizer vaccine is 95% effective when you receive both doses", who was responsible for this, any information to show what they understood the claims "its safe and "it's effective" to mean and what they expected the public to understand by these claims, and any assessment of compliance with NZBill of Rights, Health and Disabilities code, or any other consumer or human rights protection."*

Manatū Hauora, Medsafe and relevant agencies consider a range of information when deciding on whether to introduce a new vaccine, and do not rely on a single source or assessment to confirm a vaccine's effectiveness (VE). Additionally, please note that vaccine effectiveness varies depending on the type of COVID-19 variant and type of outcome we are monitoring.

This includes considering national and international studies, data and research about the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine, as well as detailed information from the manufacturer which must be supplied as part of the application process.

The COVID-19 vaccine has been thoroughly assessed for safety by our own Medsafe experts. Medsafe only grants consent for using a vaccine in New Zealand, once they're satisfied it has met strict standards for safety, efficacy and quality.

From a Manatū Hauora perspective, COVID-19 vaccines used in New Zealand remain very effective in preventing severe illness that may result in hospitalisation or death, and this is supported by the international evidence that continues to emerge. When vaccination is combined with other public health measures, such as hand-washing, mask-wearing, physical distancing and isolation when unwell, this also contributes to a reduction in transmission and infection.

In general (not COVID-19-specific), there are two mechanisms through which vaccines can potentially reduce transmission:

- Preventing infection of the vaccinated person (if a person is uninfected, they cannot transmit the virus). This is measured in VE/effectiveness against infection.
- Reducing the number of onward infections (if the vaccinated person does become infected). This is measured by assessing the reduction in the number of transmissions to contacts of infected individuals.

These two methods combine to provide a larger effect than either of them in isolation.

For the Pfizer vaccine, there is a substantial body of evidence available about its ability to reduce the number of infections (and the subsequent effect on transmission through reduction of infection). More information on this is available at the following link on page 19: [www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/sars-cov-2-variant-of-concern-update-27sep22.pdf](http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/sars-cov-2-variant-of-concern-update-27sep22.pdf).

It should be noted that data for VE (against infection and onward transmission) for variants prior to Omicron have been monitored since trial data were first released by Pfizer in 2020. VE against infection was generally higher for previous variants than for Omicron.

Advice from the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) on the COVID-19 vaccines and evidence-based recommendations is publicly available at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/covid-19-vaccine-technical-advisory-group-cv-tag](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/covid-19-vaccine-technical-advisory-group-cv-tag).

Further information about the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine against specific variants is available at: [www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-science-news](http://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-science-news). This includes information about vaccine effectiveness against infection, transmission, hospitalisation, death, and reinfection.

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](mailto: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](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Old', written in a cursive style.

Dr Andrew Old  
**Deputy Director-General**  
**Public Health Agency**