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16 February 2023

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H2022018711

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 15 December 2022 for information regarding women's health.

By way of context, Manatū Hauora collects abortion data in line with the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion (Information Collection) Regulations 2021. All the figures you have requested are not routinely collected by Manatū Hauora from abortion providers as it is not a requirement of this legislation.

The DECIDE national telehealth service provides advice and counselling for people considering an abortion. DECIDE provides early medical abortion (EMA) advice by phone, however, it is only **one** of the options available for people seeking an early medical abortion. Not all EMAs or advice is provided by DECIDE. Patients are encouraged to choose the abortion provider and abortion method that best suits their individual needs.

Alongside usual reporting requirements, DECIDE has contractual obligations to provide Manatū Hauora with specific data on their services. This is reported monthly.

Due to this special reporting, Manatū Hauora is able to answer some of your questions in relation to the DECIDE service for November 2022 only. Statistics for December 2022 were not held at the time your request was made.

I will respond to each part of your request in turn in respect to the period of 1 November to 30 November 2022.

The number of women who had the pills mifepristone and misoprostol couriered or posted to them for an early medical abortion.

From 1 November 2022 to 30 November 2022, 120 patients had mifepristone and misoprostol couriered or posted to them for an early medical abortion through the DECIDE service.

The number of prescriptions for mifepristone and misoprostol that were signed by medical practitioners, practice nurses or midwives.

Manatū Hauora does not collect the information requested and there is no requirement under the Act for agencies to create new information, provide an opinion or compile information that is not part of the usual reporting process. As such this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act. The Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act 1977 states that only a qualified health practitioner can provide abortion services.

The number of women who had a prescription for the pills mifepristone and misoprostol sent to a pharmacist for collection.

From 1 November 2022 to 30 November 2022, 106 patients received a prescription from the DECIDE telehealth service to collect abortion medication from a pharmacy.

The number of women who requested an early medical abortion and who were declined on the grounds that it was believed that they were being coerced into seeking an abortion

Manatū Hauora does not collect the information requested, as such this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act.

The abortion clinical guideline recommends practitioners advise patients of available social services and counselling services to ensure patients are supported and making their choice for themselves. Practitioners will also offer to speak to the patient alone to encourage an open and honest discussion.

The number of women who were admitted to hospital with complications resulting from an early medical abortion.

On 25 January 2023, this part of your request was transferred to Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand). You can expect a response from Te Whatu Ora in due course.

The number of women who revoked their decision to have an abortion after receiving the abortion pills.

Manatū Hauora does not collect or hold the information you have requested, as such this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act. This is not a reporting requirement.

Manatū Hauora does receive some information on the number of patients who do not proceed with termination after the medication has been dispatched from DECIDE. Patients may not proceed with taking the medication for an abortion for several reasons, including:

- Continuing pregnancy
- Miscarriage
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Preference for surgical abortion
- Sourced through another provider

Due to the small number of patients not proceeding with an abortion following medication dispatch, Manatū Hauora cannot release this information for privacy reasons.

The number of women who after taking the mifepristone sought to withdraw from the abortion procedure and choose life for their unborn child.

Manatū Hauora does not collect the information requested, as such this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act.

What advice are abortion providers required to give to women who wish to exercise their right to stop the early medical abortion after taking the mifepristone and prior to taking the misoprostol?

As per our previous responses to you on this matter, patients should discuss this with their abortion provider/treating physician. You may wish to reach out to Te Whatu Ora for more information in this matter specifically as they are responsible for the operational aspects of abortion services.

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



Ruihua Gu
Acting Group Manager, Quality Assurance and Safety
Regulatory Services | Te Pou Whakariterite Ratonga