MANATŪ HAUORA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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9 December 2024

s 9(2)(a)

[redacted]
Ref: H2024055740

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 the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 11 November 2024 for information regarding puberty blockers.

On 15 and 18 November 2024, you were advised that the following parts of your request have been transferred to Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora in accordance with section 14(b)(i) of the Act:

> *The total amount of taxpayer money allocated for the procurement and distribution of puberty blockers in New Zealand over the past five years.*
> *A breakdown of annual expenditures on puberty blockers during this period.*
> *Are puberty blockers administered or distributed within educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges? If so, please provide details on the policies and protocols governing their administration in these settings.*
> *What clinical guidelines does the Ministry of Health follow regarding the prescription and administration of puberty blockers to minors? What oversight mechanisms are in place to monitor the use of puberty blockers among youth?*

You can expect a response from that agency in due course. Should you wish to follow up, Health New Zealand can be contacted at: hnzoia@tewhatuora.govt.nz. Turning to the remainder of your request:

> *Have there been any reported adverse effects or complications associated with the use of puberty blockers in minors over the past five years? If so, please provide a summary of these reports and any actions taken in response.*

Puberty blockers are a group of medicines that have other uses but are being used ‘off-label’ to prevent puberty in people with gender dysphoria. Medsafe has not approved any medicines for this use in New Zealand. The approved medicines that we are aware may be being prescribed ‘off-label’ contain the active ingredients goserelin or leuprorelin.

The approved indications and known side effects are in the data sheets, which can be found on Medsafe’s website at the following links:

- www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/z/Zoladex10implant.pdf.
- www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/l/LucrinDepot1-month3month6monthDUALinj.pdf.

It is important to note that anyone who thinks they may have experienced an adverse reaction to a medicine can report this to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring. A summary of these reports can be found at: www.medsafe.govt.nz/Projects/B1/ADRDisclaimer.asp.

Please note that not all adverse reactions to medicines are reported and, when they are reported, the indication for use of the medicine is not required to be reported. The Ministry is unable to answer this part of your request, in accordance with section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as we do not know why the medicine was being taken, given that these medicines are approved for other uses.

> *What processes are in place to ensure that minors and their guardians provide informed consent before initiating treatment with puberty blockers?*

Under New Zealand Law, people 16 years and over are able to make treatment decisions on their own behalf. Children under the age of 16 are able to make some treatment decisions, based on their competence to make the particular decision with higher levels of competence needed for more complex treatments. When a child is deemed competent, parents cannot overturn their decision. Where they are not deemed competent and their parent or guardian decides on their behalf, they are still involved in discussions about their treatment to the extent they are able to.

Prescribers have obligations and duties relating to informed consent set out under the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights. This includes discussing with the person evidence to support the use and any potential safety concerns including an assessment of the expected risks, side effects, benefits, and costs. It is also expected that informed consent discussion and outcomes are documented in the patient's clinical record.

> *Since which year have puberty blockers been legally administered to the public in New Zealand? Under which laws or regulations are healthcare providers authorized to prescribe and administer puberty blockers?*

The Medicines Act 1981 and the Medicines Regulations 1984 enable health practitioners to prescribe medicines in New Zealand. The legislation does not differentiate between conditions being treated. Prescribers' prescribing practice must be consistent with their scope of practice and their specialty (area or practice) as specified by the prescribers' responsible authority (for example, the Medical Council for medical prescribers and the Nursing Council for Nurse Practitioners).

Puberty blockers are not used exclusively for gender affirming care and are typically brought to the New Zealand market for other uses. It is therefore not possible to state when these medicines may have been first used as puberty blockers. Goserelin was first approved in New Zealand in 1987 and leuprorelin in 1985.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: oiagr@health.govt.nz. 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

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