

04 SEP 2019

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Sharna Butcher

By email: fyi-request-10967-7603d09e@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H201907315

Dear Ms Butcher

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 11 August 2019 for:

“Pharmaceutically active compounds (PhACs) includes antibiotics, anti-epileptic medications, heart medications, pain medications, and cancer medications generally used to treat symptoms rather than underlying disease. This category also covers veterinarian drugs and feed additives used for livestock.

As already stated I require ALL/ANY data on ALL/ANY DATA regarding pharmaceuticals found in public drinking water supplies from ALL REGIONS OF NZ.

**Has there been any tests done for traces or findings of pharmaceuticals in NZ public drinking water supplies?*

**If so, were the tests done parts per trillion? And if so, were these test results made public? And if not made public - then why?*

**Have there been to date any studies/research/tests done on the health effects from pharmaceuticals found in public drinking water in Aotearoa NZ?*

**How do you monitor and measure the presence of these various (PhACs) and compounds in drinking water?*

**Specifically, which compounds are you attempting to monitor?*

**At what level?*

**For what reason?*

**Are wastewater treatment plants located upstream in surface water sources?*

**Are you attempting to address regulations?*

**What is your budget for monitoring and measuring?*

**How do you intend to use the data you gather?*

**What is the current regulatory status of (PhACs) in public drinking water supplies?*

**Has documented and/or published findings on Human health risk assessment for pharmaceuticals in drinking-water been done?*

**Noting that pharmaceuticals in drinking-water are an emerging issue, WHO will continue to review relevant scientific evidence and, where necessary, update the guidance provided in this report.*

**Please list all treatment Options to remove Pharmaceuticals in the drinking water?*

**Has anyone in Aotearoa NZ died due to the effects of pharmaceuticals in public drinking water in NZ?*

And finally, can a updated/new full test analysis on pharmaceuticals in drinking water throughout NZ Nationwide be done please and all results published publicly.”

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) has not undertaken any testing for pharmaceuticals in New Zealand drinking-water supplies. Water testing is not routinely undertaken by the Ministry, but by local water suppliers. The local water suppliers should have identified all risks to their drinking-water supplies in their water safety plan, including catchment risks if their drinking water intake is downstream from a wastewater treatment plant.

The Ministry is aware of a study undertaken by Auckland council on the health effects of these compounds arising from drinking-water supplies. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also conducted some research on the health effects and monitoring requirements for these compounds, which is available on their website:

https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2011/pharmaceuticals_20110601.pdf.

The availability of safe drinking-water for all New Zealanders, irrespective of where they live, is a fundamental requirement for public health. The Drinking-Water Standards for New Zealand (the Standards) provide requirements for drinking-water safety by specifying the:

- maximum amounts of substances or organisms or contaminants or residues that may be present in drinking water
- criteria for demonstrating compliance with the Standards
- remedial action to be taken in the event of non-compliance with the different aspects of the Standards.

The Standards are publicly available on the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) website:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/drinking-water-standards-new-zealand-2005-revised-2018>.

Further information is available in the Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality Management for New Zealand which is publicly available on the Ministry's website:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/guidelines-drinking-water-quality-management-new-zealand>.

The drinking-water advisory committee is considering emerging contaminants as part of the Standards. The Ministry will also continue to review advice from the WHO on these compounds. There is no current requirement to monitor the compounds in the Standards and in the absence of any evidence of concern, the Ministry would not prioritise resources to monitoring.

There is no evidence that anyone has died from the effects of pharmaceuticals in drinking water. Concentrations of pharmaceuticals in drinking-water are generally more than thousandfold below the minimum therapeutic dose (MTD), which is the lowest clinically active dosage.

I trust that this information fulfils your request. Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Please note that this response (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Ministry of Health website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D Woodley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Woodley
Deputy Director-General
Population Health and Prevention

