

30 April 2020

By email: [REDACTED]
Ref: H202002040

Dear [REDACTED]

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 (the Ministry) on 4 April 2020 for:

*“What is the current death toll for 2020 for flu/pneumonia in NZ ?
What is the current infection numbers for 2020 for flu/pneumonia in NZ ?
What is the worst death toll/infections NZ has ever had for flu/pneumonia illness?
What year was that?
What were the main strains of flu/cold causing that outbreak?
Does a vaccine exist anywhere for any coronavirus virus strain at all? (not covoid19). Sars1? MERS?
Please list the current main health officials advising the government on covoid19, qualifications and contact details for media purposes.
Where is the data for the modelling this government used to lock down NZ for covoid19?”*

Information in response to your request is as follows.

“What is the current death toll for 2020 for flu/pneumonia in NZ?”

This information does not exist yet, as such this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act. This information is expected to be published in December 2022.

“What is the current infection numbers for 2020 for flu/pneumonia in NZ?”

This information is not held by the Ministry or another agency subject to the Act therefore, your request for this information is refused under section 18(g) of the Act.

For your reference, the best source for information on the number of influenza cases is ESR's virological surveillance which is publicly available at the following link:
<https://surv.esr.cri.nz/virology/virology.php>.

"What is the worst death toll/infections NZ has ever had for flu/pneumonia illness? What year was that?"

The most deaths due to influenza and pneumonia from 1948 to 2016, was in 1985. There were 1551 deaths with an age standardised rate of 39.7 per 100,000.

The highest death rate was in 1964, where there were 1515 deaths with an age standardised rate of 59.8 per 100,000.

Age standardised rate is a technique used to allow populations to be compared when the age profiles of the populations are different.

Please note, a change in the World Health Organisation (WHO) coding rules were implemented in 1998 and this resulted in a sharp drop in the number of pneumonia deaths.

"What were the main strains of flu/cold causing that outbreak?"

This information is not held by the Ministry or another agency subject to the Act, as such your request for this information is refused under section 18(g) of the Act.

However, for the 1985 data, please refer to the table below for the available breakdown.

Code	Strain	Number of deaths
480.9	Viral pneumonia unspecified	25
481	Pneumococcal pneumonia	175
482.1	Pneumonia due to Pseudomonas	1
482.2	Pneumonia due to Haemophilus influenzae (H. influenzae)	1
483.3	Pneumonia due to Streptococcus	6
482.4	Pneumonia due to Staphylococcus	8
482.8	Pneumonia due to other specified bacteria	4
482.9	Bacterial pneumonia, unspecified	18
483	Pneumonia due to other specified organism	2
485	Bronchopneumonia, organism unspecified	969
486	Pneumonia, organism unspecified	190
487.0	Influenza with pneumonia	111
487.1	Influenza with other respiratory manifestations	41

Please note, the 1964 available breakdown cannot be provided as Ministry staff would need to refer to documentation located in the Ministry building. Given the current circumstances of the alert level 4 lockdown, the Ministry is unable to fulfil this.

"Does a vaccine exist anywhere for any coronavirus virus strain at all? (not covid19). Sars1? MERS?"

There is no vaccine for any human coronavirus strain. It is estimated that the COVID-19 tested vaccine is over a year away.

"Please list the current main health officials advising the government on covid19, qualifications and contact details for media purposes."

The Ministry and its health officials are supporting the Director-General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield and the Minister of Health, Hon Dr David Clark, with the COVID-19 response. Any media queries should be directed to the Ministry's media team via the following email address: media@health.govt.nz.

"Where is the data for the modelling this government used to lock down NZ for covid19?"

The modelling was conducted by the University of Otago prior to the nation entering Alert Level 4. The University of Otago would be best placed to answer any further queries about the underlying data. The modelling reports are also publicly available on the Ministry website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/covid-19-modelling-and-other-commissioned-reports>.

You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to refuse your request.

Yours sincerely



Jane Kelley
Director
COVID-19 Response

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