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10 February 2023

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H2023019243

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 January 2023 for information regarding strep throat testing. You requested:

“Given the recent strep a issues in the UK, will NZ be introducing rapid strep testing this year like what is offered in the US? Does Nz have a plan in place for how to deal with an influx of children with this issue and a plan for ensuring sufficient antibiotic supplies?”

Manatū Hauora is aware of the situation with Group A Streptococcus overseas and is currently monitoring the situation. We have surveillance in place to be able to detect any increasing cases here, and any recommendations to change our testing approach would be based on a public health assessment of the risk.

Antibiotic supply falls within the responsibility of Pharmac. Pharmac has advised that the usual treatment for Strep A is oral amoxicillin or azithromycin. These are very commonly used antibiotics and the number of children with Strep A who will require treatment is minimal compared to the current usage. Pharmac do not anticipate any issues with maintaining sufficient stocks of antibiotics, even in the event of an increase in Strep A.

Under Pharmac contracts, suppliers are generally required to keep a minimum stock in New Zealand equal to two months' demand. There is typically another four to six weeks' worth of stock available across the wholesale and retail supply chain. Some medicines (for example, some oral antibiotics) have a greater minimum stock holding requirement, such as four to six months.

Pharmac provides information publicly about stock issues where there is a public impact. See Pharmac's website for a list of funded medicines and devices that are experiencing stock shortages: www.pharmac.govt.nz/medicine-notices.

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

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 | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui