MANATŪ HAUORA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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18 April 2023

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Ref: H2023021507

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) which was transferred from the Department of Internal Affairs to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 8 March 2023. Each part of your request is responded to below.

> *"Please provide the scientific evidence that backs up the following statements made by the NZ Government and MOH.*
> *1. "Safe and Effective."*

Information regarding the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine can be found on the Manatū Hauora website at the following links:

- The Coronavirus Immunisation handbook: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/immunisation-handbook-2020/5-coronavirus-disease-covid-19. This also provides references to scientific studies conducted regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine.
- The vaccine datasheet: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/c/comirnatyinj.pdf.
- Medsafe also publishes up to date information about the Comirnaty vaccine, including its clinical efficacy and safety: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/PUArticles/June2021/Spotlight-on-Comirnaty-vaccine.html.
- Manatū Hauora webpage regarding vaccine safety and efficacy: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-effectiveness-and-protection.
- Manatū Hauora also regularly updates the Science News page for up to date information regarding COVID-19 and the Vaccine: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-science-news.
- To find out more about the breadth of evidence, including vaccine effectiveness against infection and transmission, considered by the COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) you can visit: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/covid-19-vaccine-technical-advisory-group-cv-tag.

Throughout this response, I have provided the links to information where it is publicly available in accordance with section 18(d) of the Act.

2. "Unvaccinated health professionals" pose harm to the public.

Manatū Hauora has not collated data specific to this topic. However, as part of an overall review of evidence on booster vaccines, Manatū Hauora has examined studies which looked at the vaccination of healthcare workers. This can be found here: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/cv_tag_second_boosters_update.pdf.

3. Vaccinations prevent transmission of COVID 19.

Information collated by Manatū Hauora on COVID-19 transmission is publicly available at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news#variants.

In general (not COVID-19-specific), there are two mechanisms through which vaccines can potentially reduce transmission:

1. Preventing infection of the vaccinated person (if a person is uninfected, they cannot transmit the virus). This is measured in vaccine efficacy/effectiveness against infection.
2. Reducing the number of onward infections (if the vaccinated person does become infected). This is measured by assessing the reduction in the number of transmissions to contacts of infected individuals.

These two methods combine to provide a larger effect than either of them in isolation.

For the Pfizer vaccine, there is a substantial body available about its ability to reduce the number of infections (and the subsequent effect on transmission through reduction of infection). The data has been monitored by Manatū Hauora and is publicly available at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news#variants.

Although the vaccine effectiveness against infection reduces over time, an effect does persist for a period after vaccination (for example it is estimated 50% of infections are prevented at around four months after vaccination for individuals aged 18-59 years). Effects on onward transmissions (that is, the ability of a vaccinated person to transmit on to other people) substantially more challenging to measure (and the results harder to interpret) there are far fewer studies. The limited data that are available for Omicron on onward transmission after infection (all vaccines, not limited to Pfizer) are available at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news#variants.

It should be noted that data for vaccine effectiveness (against infection and onward transmission) for variants prior to Omicron have been monitored since trial data were first released by Pfizer in 2020. Vaccine effectiveness against infection was generally higher for previous variants than for Omicron.

4. Unvaccinated pose high risk of transmission of Covid 19.

Manatū Hauora publishes regular updates about COVID-19 variants, including information about vaccine effectiveness and transmission. The variants of concern updates can be found at: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-science-news#variants.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group (CV TAG) considers a breadth of evidence when making decisions, including evidence about vaccine effectiveness against infection and transmission. CT TAG documents are publicly available at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/covid-19-vaccine-technical-advisory-group-cv-tag.

> *5. Evidence that COVID 19 has been Isolated in a laboratory in Humans in New Zealand.*

Manatū Hauora does not hold information relating to this part of your request. It is more closely connected to the functions of Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand. You may wish to contact Te Whatu Ora at: hnzoia@health.govt.nz.

I trust this information fulfils your request. 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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