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Ref: H2023022126

Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora – the Ministry of Health on 17 March 2023. You requested:

- “1. Is this practice of charging patients service fees, prior to rendering service, legal within New Zealand?*
- 2. Is the Ministry aware of this practice in primary health care elsewhere within New Zealand, and if so, how widespread is it?*
- 3. What is the Ministry’s position on this practice?*
- 4. Has the Ministry reported such practices to Parliament? If not, please advise why not? If it has, please provide me with any reporting thereon.”*

It is free of charge to enrol with a general practice in Aotearoa; however general practice may charge a consultation fee. Further information about visiting a doctor or nurse and associated charges is available at: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/visiting-doctor-or-nurse.

Most general practice are private businesses. The mechanism they use to charge individuals, including whether patients are charged prior to, or after a consultation, is not set in legislation or directed by Manatū Hauora.

Although Manatū Hauora is aware of the practice of charging patient fees upfront, we do not track or report on the number of providers that use this approach to charging. Manatū Hauora has not reported the up-front charging policies of primary health care providers to Parliament.

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.

Nāku noa, na

Kelly Palmer

**Acting Group Manager – Family and Community Health Policy
Strategy, Policy and Legislation | Te Pou Rautaki**