

5 June 2020

Debbie Love

By email: fyi-request-12806-ee7c43ef@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202003117

Dear Ms Love

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request of 7 May 2020 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for:

“OIA - MoH advice given to GPs regarding diagnosis of stress during covid19

*What advice has been given to GPs in relation to diagnosing stress during covid?
And why?*

*What advice has been given to GPs around not to give medical certificates for stress
as a result of covid? And why?*

*Why are GPs being advised to make stress an issue between employers and
employees?*

*What makes the government experts on what constitutes "stress"? Is this not the
expertise of the medical profession?*

*Is this to manipulate data by avoiding acknowledging that the lockdown is the
stressor?.”*

General Practitioners (GPs), practice nurses and other health professionals are trained to talk with people about stress and distress. The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) expects that these health professionals are doing this as part of their usual practice during lockdown and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no formal advice on how to do this in relation to lockdown, we expect them to use their clinical skills and knowledge to assess and help manage people's distress. As such, your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and we have no grounds to believe it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

The Ministry has made a number of new resources available to help people manage their mental health and wellbeing, both throughout lockdown and over the next few months. We are working to ensure that GPs and other frontline health staff are aware of these resources so that the people who need them are aware of them. These can be found at the following link: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>

You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made in response to your request.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RS', is positioned below the closing text.

Robyn Shearer
Deputy Director General
Mental Health and Addiction