

31 May 2018

Jason McIntosh
fyi-request-7856-192c8163@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: H201803877

Dear Mr McIntosh

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request of 25 May 2018 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for

'On average how many children are diagnosed with autism in New Zealand each year?
Is there a link between vaccinations and autism?
Have any children been diagnosed with autism that were not vaccinated?
How much money is spent by lobbyists to push vaccinations?
Is any of this information withheld or suppressed to the public for commercial reasons?'

The information relating to this request is itemised below. Specific grounds are noted in each document where information has been withheld.

Request	Response
1. On average how many children are diagnosed with autism in New Zealand each year?	<p>There is no definitive information on the prevalence and incidence of ASD in New Zealand. Recent data (2006) from the United Kingdom reported a total prevalence of all ASDs of 116.1 per 10,000 children, with a prevalence of autism of 38.9 per 10,000 childrenⁱ. Boys are affected about four times more frequently than girls.ⁱⁱ Extrapolating this prevalence data across an estimated NZ population of 4.7 million means that it is estimated there may be more than 55,000 individuals in New Zealand who have ASD, although many adults may not have received a diagnosis.</p> <p>The Ministries of Health and Education have developed the ASD Guidelines to guide best practice in the diagnosis and support for ASD in New Zealand. The Guideline can be found here: http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/new-zealand-autism-spectrum-disorder-guideline</p>

Request	Response
2. Is there a link between vaccinations and autism?	<p>There is no longitudinal study on the prevalence and incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in New Zealand that would enable us to say whether rates have increased since MMR vaccine was introduced here in 1990.</p> <p>There are currently international indications that the incidence of ASD may be rising. It is not clear whether this change is due to an actual increase in incidence, increased awareness, or changes in the diagnostic criteria for ASD.</p>
3. Have any children been diagnosed with autism that were not vaccinated?	<p>There is a large body of international evidence that shows there is no connection between MMR vaccine and ASD. One example is a Japanese study that showed that ASD continued to increase after MMR vaccine was withdrawn there in 1993 over unrelated issues. This and other studies are summarised at the following link: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Vaccine-Studies-Examine-the-Evidence.asp</p>
4. How much money is spent by lobbyists to push vaccinations?	This request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the Ministry of Health does not hold this information.
5. Is any of this information withheld or suppressed to the public for commercial reasons?	This request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the Ministry of Health does not hold this information.

I trust this information fulfils your request. You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to withhold information under this request.

Yours sincerely



Jill Lane
Director
Service Commissioning

ⁱ Baird G, Simonoff E, Pickles A, et al. Prevalence of disorders of the autism spectrum in a popular cohort of children in South Thames: the Special Needs and Autism Project (SNAP). *Lancet* 2006; 368:210-15

ⁱⁱ Fombonne E. The prevalence of autism. *JAMA* 2003; 289:87-9