

- 7 MAY 2013

No. 1 The Terrace  
PO Box 5013  
Wellington 6145  
New Zealand  
T +64 4 496 2000

David Burgess  
fyi-request-816-7db46a10@requests.fyi.org.nz

Ref: H201301328

Dear Mr Burgess

Thank you for your email of 10 April 2013 requesting official information on the release of personal information from the National Health Index (NHI) database.

The answers to your questions are as follows:

1. *What personal information was available to researchers?*

Only the ethnicity data was supplied by the Ministry of Health to the researchers. The Ministry of Health identified the NHI numbers for study participants who did not have an NHI number, and supplied ethnicity data from the NHI for all people in the study. The Ministry did not supply the NHI number to the researchers.

I would note that the NHI database does not contain medical information about patients.

2. *What access to the NHI database did the researchers have?*

The researchers did not have access to the NHI database. A data extract was provided to them containing the relevant information.

3. *Other than clinicians actually dealing with a patient who has access to the NHI database?*

Access to the NHI database for operational use is limited to the agencies listed in Schedule 2 of the Health Information Privacy Code. These are:

1.	Ministry of Health
2.	District Health Boards
3.	Hospitals
4.	Primary health organisations
5.	Independent practitioner associations
6.	Health practitioners
7.	New Zealand Blood Service
8.	Accident Compensation Corporation
9.	Department of Corrections health services
10.	New Zealand Defence Force health services
11.	Pharmaceutical Management Agency of New Zealand
12.	Any health agency which has a contract with the Accident Compensation Corporation or a District Health Board or the Ministry of Health to provide health and disability services

4. *Were the individuals that were the subject of the research asked to provide informed consent before their personal information was given to researchers?*

The study participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the reasons for the research, and what would be done with their data. All participants provided informed consent to the researchers before their personal details were supplied to the Ministry of Health.

5. *How is usage of the NHI database and the associated medical files managed, tracked and audited?*

The Ministry of Health assesses all requests for access to the NHI database and applies a range of policies and legal scrutiny to ensure patient confidentiality is maintained. Where an organization or individual is eligible to access the NHI database for operational use, all transactions are logged. Where an organization or individual is not entitled to direct access for operational purposes, a request for information from the NHI would be made to the Ministry and considered under the Health Information Privacy Code. An extract may be provided once relevant privacy and confidentiality issues have been resolved.

The Ministry of Health maintains a variety of databases containing information on hospitalisations, pharmaceuticals and other health services. Any request for identifiable information would be made to the Ministry and considered under the Health Information Privacy Code.

If you have any queries about this, please direct them to Analytical Services, Ministry of Health. They can be contacted by phone on (04) 496-2000, fax on (04) 816-2898 or by e-mail ([data-enquiries@moh.govt.nz](mailto:data-enquiries@moh.govt.nz)).

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision on this request.

Yours sincerely



Chai Chuah  
**National Director**  
**National Health Board**