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9(2)(a)

RE Official Information Act request CDHB 10274(a)

I refer to your email dated 6 March 2020 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB. This request being a follow up to our response to Official Information Act request CDHB 10274. Specifically:

In December 2019, MPI were quoted in the mainstream media by journalist Lee Kenny, as stating, that 3 out of the 5 specimens, were confirmed to be Clostridium Perfringens, from the December 3 Christchurch Girls' High School Leavers' Dinner, at the Addington Events' Centre, Christian Cullen Lounge. The OIA response I have received recently, contradicts this, stating just one case confirmed. You will appreciate that attendees who provided faecal samples, received notification of what was confirmed in their specimens:

One of the three samples that tested positive for *C. perfringens* met the threshold to be a confirmed case. The other two samples did not meet the threshold to be confirmed as *C. perfringens* but it was detected. Lee Kenny's article dated 19/12/2019 says "Clostridium perfringens was found in three of the five samples taken from attendees at the event." Lee Kenny was given the information of the two samples having detected *C. perfringens* but not meeting the threshold to be confirmed.

Laboratory results sent to those who provided specimens, were accompanied by information which indicated that beef was the common denominator, in the incident and details on how this toxin occurs and is released. Again, this has not been admitted in mainstream media articles. The extensive list of symptoms displayed in the OIA response, is not in keeping with mainstream media articles either, from information that presumably was provided by Community and Public Health. Four articles have been written by MSM on this incident. The articles made light of the situation and of the extent of symptoms, in terms of types, numbers of those affected and the severity of those symptoms, in terms of how long these symptoms lasted.

The media article dated 11 December 2019 did not contain any information detailing symptoms. The journalist who wrote the article did not request this information. The media article dated 19 December 2019 stated "Symptoms of the bacteria include profuse watery diarrhea and severe stomach cramps

that usually subside within 24 hours. Nausea is commonly associated with the toxin but vomiting is rare." The journalist wrote this presumably from their own research.

I know of at least four attendees, who had diarrhoea initially and then nausea, lasting three weeks. It has also come to my attention, that not all student attendees who were symptomatic, completed the CPH questionnaires, so the number of affected diners was larger than reported in the media and as a result, the ESR database, is incorrect. In fact, no numbers were mentioned at all, in respect to the numbers affected. This also demonstrates the inaccuracy of numbers reported, in the OIA response. So it was indeed a significant event, for which the Events' Centre has been able to sweep under the carpet and not publicly apologise for.

Community and Public Health sent a questionnaire to the school for distribution to school pupils and parents who had attended the event. The return of questionnaires is voluntary. It is recognised that there will be a number who attended and may have been unwell, who will not respond to the questionnaire. That is beyond the control of Community and Public Health. The information in the response to the OIA request was an accurate analysis of returned questionnaires.

The ESR database has been woeful in its presentation of the December 2019 details, regarding this food poisoning incident. Again this is in stark contrast to the details provided by ESR for other pathogens confirmed in the other gastroenteritis outbreaks, during the same time period. I have asked for an explanation from ESR on this and from Community Public Health, in an email in January. To date, neither have been courteous enough to respond.

Please note: Community and Public Health is not aware of any email in January sent to us from you. We were only responding to your query dated 17 February 2020 which was responded to as Official Information Act request CDHB 10274.

Presentation of data on the ESR database is not the responsibility of Community and Public Health.

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Canterbury DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Gullery
Executive Director
Planning, Funding & Decision Support