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RE Official Information Act request CDHB 10242

I refer to your email dated 19 December 2019, requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB. Specifically:

- **Is someone able to explain why there are so few "discarded" cases in the WHO report when the vast majority of PCR tests are negative? Discarded cases are ones that were suspicious cases but proved negative on testing. On that basis there seem like several thousand negative cases fit that criteria. Their data was for 2019. I've been told the data came from the NZ Measles Lab.**

Response:

Thank you for making us aware of this discrepancy. You are right, the number of discarded cases should be much higher in the World Health Organization (WHO) country slide for NZ, compared to the number of laboratory confirmed cases, since the majority of suspected measles samples tested negative for measles. This discrepancy in the reporting to the WHO might come from two facts:

The monthly report generated by the surveillance team at Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) and forwarded to the WHO through the National Measles and Rubella Lab (NMRL) only contains those cases reported as confirmed measles cases (laboratory or clinically confirmed), epi-linked, or pending classification. But it does not contain the discarded non-measles cases, even though they are captured in the EpiSurv database.

In addition, the NMRL in Christchurch is only able to report positive and negative (discarded) cases tested at the NMRL as well as positive cases tested anywhere else in the country to the WHO, because the NMRL only receives reports of positive measles cases from other labs, but not of those that tested negative. Since the current outbreak had its focus in Auckland, the majority of cases were tested in Auckland and reported to the WHO via the NMRL as positive cases. The negative tested cases were not captured in the reporting. Only those tested during the small Canterbury outbreak also contained negative/discarded cases, because in this case all samples were tested at the NMRL in Christchurch.

This is indeed a reporting mistake and it needs to be fixed in the future. ESR should be able to generate a report of all discarded cases for the whole of NZ and this additional report needs to be included into the monthly reporting to the WHO. But from the WHO country slides for other countries with recent outbreaks (e.g. Germany, Italy, UK, Australia) it also looks like the number of discarded cases is

disproportionally low compared to the number of laboratory confirmed cases. It seems that most countries give priority to reporting confirmed cases and do not report all negative/discarded cases.

Thank you very much for pointing out this issue.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carolyn Gullery', with a long, sweeping underline.

Carolyn Gullery
Executive Director
Planning, Funding & Decision Support