



West Coast District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora a Rohe o Tai Poutini

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28 October 2020

9(2)(a)

RE Official information request WCDHB 9477

I refer to your email dated 30 September 2020 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from the West Coast DHB. Specifically:

- 1. What has the DHB spent on locums for medical specialists every year for the past five years in the following departments?**
 - General surgery
 - Orthopaedics
 - Enterology
 - Gynaecology
 - Ophthalmology
 - Urology
 - Cardiology
- 2. Could I please have the total locum spend year by year over this period, as well as the total internal staff spent on specialists for the same periods?**

Among the departments listed above, West Coast DHB only employs resident specialists in the fields of general surgery, gynaecology (including obstetrics) and, until four years ago, orthopaedics. Expenditure on locums for specialists in these services year by year over the past five years was as follows in **Table one** (below).

Table one:

Specialty:	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
General Surgery	\$1,131,426	\$1,402,744	\$1,341,385	\$1,182,431	\$1,254,269
Orthopaedics	\$8,931	\$ -			
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	\$292,746	\$343,747	\$418,723	\$318,545	\$795,650

West Coast DHB contracts for visiting services to be provided in the other department fields listed above, as well as orthopaedics from 2015/16 onward. As such, there is no locum expenditure paid for these specialties.

Please refer to **Table two** (below) for expenditure on internal (resident) specialist staff in the fields of general surgery and of obstetrics and gynaecology year by year over the past five years was as follows:

Table two:

Specialty:	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
General Surgery	\$761,164	\$311,338	\$185,578	\$679,836	\$670,563
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	\$867,088	\$895,323	\$1,041,858	\$1,015,981	\$822,116

There was only one orthopaedic surgeon employed by West Coast DHB in a clinical capacity in 2015/16. Release of the specific detailed information requested would easily lead to the identification of the income of the individual concerned. We therefore decline to provide additional information in respect of Question 2 under Section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act i.e. “...to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons.”

3. What is the size of the population the DHB serves and what is its annual operating budget?

Please refer to the Documents Library on the West Coast DHB website for the 2020/2021 Annual Plan, which contains information on the population size that the DHB serves and contains its annual operating budget: <https://www.wcdhb.health.nz/about-us/document-library/>

4. It would also be helpful to have explanations for higher (or lower) than usual locum costs for particular periods and whether or not the DHB offers limited services in respective departments.

Locum costs vary year on year depending on staffing requirements; particularly to covering for staff vacancies that arise from time to time, and for providing cover for periods of annual leave, sick leave and sabbatical leave taken by resident specialists, to ensure core services have been fully specialist-staffed throughout the period as best as possible.

Those services not provided by resident specialists are limited in terms of the number of visits that are able to be conducted by visiting clinicians; with many West Coast residents additionally having to travel to other centres – principally in Christchurch – for other secondary and tertiary level inpatient and outpatient assessment and treatment interventions.

I trust this satisfies your interest in this matter.

You may, under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act, seek a review of our decision to withhold information by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz; or Freephone 0800 802 602.

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

Yours sincerely



Ralph La Salle
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Planning, Funding & Decision Support