



Ministry
of Defence

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Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 30 August 2019 requesting the following information:

“Under the FOI Act, can you please advised how many service personnel have been prescribed opioid painkillers such as Codeine, Fentanyl (Actiq, Duragesic, Fentora, Abstral, Onsolis):Hydrocodone (Hysingla, Zohydro ER), Hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Lorcet, Lortab, Norco, Vicodin), Hydromorphone (Dilaudid, Exalgo), Meperidine (Demerol), Methadone (Dolophine, Methadone).

Could you also provide details of service personnel being treated for opioid addiction. I would like figures for the last three years.”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Ministry of Defence requires further information in order to determine how to answer your request.

Firstly, please clarify if you would like information relating to prescriptions for only the drugs listed in your request, or information relating to all opioid painkillers (Annex A). Please note, the full list of opioid painkillers also includes items such as “aspirin, paracetamol and codeine”, “Panadol ultra”, and “ibuprofen and codeine”.

With regards to service personnel treated for opioid addiction, please clarify if you require information relating to treatment provided at any point in the last three years, or information on treatment that is currently ongoing; however noting that to identify treatments provided to personnel may require a review of individual medical records.

Additionally, please clarify if you require information relating to treatment provided at a MOD Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) or treatment provided by a General Practitioner in primary care.

Once you have clarified your request, I will be pleased to consider it again.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to note that information is held on prescriptions issued to UK Armed Forces personnel by the MOD. However, it is not possible to identify from centrally held coded information the condition for which the drugs were prescribed. It is also not possible to identify that the patient went on to take the drug.

You may also find it useful to note that information on personnel with opioid addiction may be identified through the presence of a Read code for opioid misuse in the electronic medical record.

Treatment for some mental health conditions, such as opioid addiction, can be provided at both primary care level and at a MOD Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) for specialist mental health care. In order to identify if treatment was provided and to determine if treatment is currently ongoing may require a review of individual medical records and may exceed the appropriate limit to locate, retrieve and extract this information.

Data are compiled by Defence Statistics Health from the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP) data warehouse. DMICP has a centralised data warehouse of coded information. It is the source of electronic, integrated healthcare records for primary healthcare and some MOD specialist care providers. DMICP was rolled out in 2007 and legacy medical data for currently serving personnel was migrated across during rollout.

The electronic patient record has information that is Read coded. Read codes are a set of clinical codes designed for Primary Care to record the everyday care of a Patient. They are part of a hierarchical structure and form the recognised standard for General Practice.

DCMHs are specialised psychiatric services based on community mental health teams closely located with primary care services at sites in the UK and abroad.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

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