

FOI 23/489

Dear

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act of 04 July 2023; please accept our apologies for the delay in this reply.

You requested:

Can I be provided a copy of the minutes of all meetings by the CHM Sodium Valproate Expert Working Group in 2022 and 2023 to date?

We confirm that we hold the information you have requested. However, the information is exempt from release under: Section 22 – Information intended for future publication: the information you have requested is due to be published in the coming weeks. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, which means that we have considered whether the public interest in releasing the information is outweighed by the public interest in not giving the information. In favour of disclosure, we consider that there is a general public benefit from publishing the scientific basis for regulatory decisions in order to promote understanding of the decisions taken. However, we consider that the public interest will be better served by not releasing the information in advance of the publication of the full package of information for healthcare professionals and patients.

Section 35 – Formulation of Government policy: the information you have requested is being withheld under section 35 of the FOI Act. Section 35 protects the internal deliberative process as it relates to Government policy making. In other words, the exemption is intended to ensure that the possibility of public exposure does not deter from full, candid and proper deliberation of policy formulation and development, including the exploration of all options, the keeping of detailed records and the taking of difficult decisions. Section 35 is a qualified exemption, which means that we have considered whether the public interest in releasing the information is outweighed by the public interest in not giving the information. In favour of disclosure, we consider that there is a general public benefit from publishing the scientific basis for regulatory decisions in order to promote understanding of the decisions taken. However, we consider that the public interest will be better served by not releasing the information at the current time as to release information prematurely before the regulatory action is finalised could create confusion.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date you receive this response and addressed to: info@mhra.gov.uk

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

If you were to remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you would have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please bear in mind that the Information Commissioner will not normally review our handling of your request unless you have first contacted us to conduct an internal review. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

MHRA Customer Experience Centre
Communications and engagement team
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency
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