

Date 27/05/2025
Your Ref
Our Ref 9911

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION - PRESCRIBING ERRORS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to prescribing errors.

Please note, a wrongly prescribed drug may not necessarily have been administered (given) to the patient.

Question:

1. *How many instances of prescribing errors/accidental overdoses by medical staff have been recorded by NHS Lothian between 2019 and 2024? Could we please have a breakdown of each year? (Confirmed on 08/05/25 for the purposes of this FOI, "prescribing errors" refers to incorrect dosage being prescribed/administered).*

Answer:

Search Criteria 1

The table below indicates the number of adverse events reported under the **Category Medication** in NHS Lothian where the incorrect dosage was prescribed/administered between 01/01/2019 and 31/12/2024. The data is broken down by **Sub Category ADMIN: dose, strength wrong** and **PRESC: dose/strength prescribed is wrong** by calendar year.

Sub Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ADMIN: dose, strength wrong	247	256	293	320	379	490
PRESC: dose/strength prescribed is wrong	104	92	137	107	148	180

Search Criteria 2

The table below indicates the number of adverse events reported under the **Medication Form** in NHS Lothian where the incorrect dosage was prescribed/administered between 01/01/2019 and 31/12/2024. The data is recorded under **Stage Administration/supply of a medicine from a clinical area** and **Prescribing**. The data is then broken down by **Medication Error Wrong quantity** and **Wrong/unclear dose or strength** by calendar year.

In addition to Search Criteria 1, duplicate adverse events have been removed.

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102 West Port
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Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE
Chief Executive Professor Caroline Hiscox
Lothian NHS Board is the common
name of Lothian Health Board

Medication Form - Stage: Administration/supply of a medicine from a clinical area	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Wrong quantity	46	41	38	40	62	65
Wrong/unclear dose or strength	25	15	22	28	28	38

Medication Form - Stage: Prescribing	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Wrong quantity	12	≤5	≤5	7	9	8
Wrong/unclear dose or strength	17	12	22	11	24	21

Question:

2. *How many apologies for prescribing errors/accidental overdoses has NHS Lothian issued in the period between 2019 and 2024?*

Answer:

Information is not recorded in a way that would allow us to provide an answer for this question, "apology" is not recorded separately as a criteria. Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form and it would be necessary to review all case files relating to patients over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

Question:

3. *How many instances of prescribing errors/accidental overdoses have been recorded in children under the age of 5 by NHS Lothian between 2019 and 2024? Could we please have a breakdown of each year?*

Answer:

Information is not recorded in a way that would allow us to provide an answer for this question. Under the Freedom of Information Act NHS Lothian is not required to create new records to enable it to respond to your enquiry. This information is not collated or held in aggregate form and it would be necessary to review all case files relating to patients over the period you have requested to assemble the information you seek. Even if NHS Lothian did this – and there would be significant cost implications in doing so – it would be unable to respond in full to your request. The information requested is therefore exempt under section 12.1 – Cost.

Question:

4. *How many fatalities were recorded by NHS Lothian between 2019 and 2024 due to prescribing errors/accidental overdoses? Could we please have a breakdown of each year?*

Answer:

There were 5 or fewer deaths adverse events recorded in NHS Lothian where the incorrect dosage was prescribed/administered between 01/01/2019:31/12/2024.

Question:

5. *How many patients were left with permanent disfigurements or illnesses as a result of prescribing errors/accidental overdoses between 2019 and 2024? Could we please have a breakdown of each year?*

Answer:

There were 8 *Major Harm adverse events recorded in NHS Lothian where the incorrect dosage was prescribed/administered between 01/01/2019:31/12/2024.

* NHS Lothian definitions of harm:

Major Harm - Intervention required to sustain life / long term incapacity or disability requiring medical treatment and/or counselling (e.g. All fractures with exception of fingers and toes)

To protect the identity of the individuals involved any figure of 5 or less has not been shown in this response. Since we do not have their consent to release this data from their records, the information is exempt under section 38(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act i.e. to provide it would breach the Data Protection Act (2018).

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.



FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive