

# Up to 1 million New Zealand patients' data breached in criminal cyber hack

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Tū Ora Compass Health hacked

Up to 1 million New Zealanders could have their medical data in criminal hands after cyber attacks dating back years.

could also be affected.

While individual GP notes were not hacked, Tū Ora's computer system was. The extent that patient files were accessed was impossible to ascertain, chief executive Martin Hefford said.



A Vanda the God cyber attack on a Wellington primary health organisation sparked an investigation which found hacks back to 2016.

SUPPLIED / NOT-FOR-SYNDICATION

PHOs held individual data such as medical centre enrolment information including names, ages, ethnicities, and addresses.

\* **Just Jeans and Jay Jays owner the latest business affected by Page Up hack**

\* **Spark customers call for information on major security breach**

It also held data - in a way that could be linked back to individual patients - relating to smoking status and if patients had been advised to limit alcohol intake.



Tū Ora Compass Health chief executive Martin Hefford has confirmed the details of nearly 1 million patients may have been hacked.

ROSS GIBLIN / STUFF

Some information was held on which children were due immunisations, whether diabetes checks were current, whether people over 65 had a flu vaccination, people admitted to hospital for potentially-avoidable conditions, women needing to be recalled for cervical screening, and people due for heart and diabetes checks.

Some services - such as mental health counselling diabetes care, and podiatry services - were run by the PHO and were possibly accessed.

The current population of the area covered was about 648,000 but, given the information could go back to 2002, nearly 1 million living and dead people could be



It may never be known who hacked the system, nor why.

SIMON O'CONNOR / STUFF

The PHO became aware it had been hacked in August after its website was defaced by global cyber security hack "Vanda the God".

The attack sparked Tū Ora to take services offline, strengthen security, and launch an investigation. That investigation - which included National Cyber Security Centre, Ministry of Health, and police - found evidence of previous attacks going back to 2016.

"Despite careful investigation, we cannot say for certain whether or not the cyber attacks resulted in any individual patient information being accessed. It is likely we



Ministry of Health director general of health Ashley Bloomfield confirmed the Ministry was notified.

ROSS GIBLIN / STUFF

It was unclear who was behind the attacks, where they originated from, or what the purpose was, though one theory was harvesting information for the purpose of identity theft, he said.

PHOs oversee primary health care such as GPs and primary health care nurses. Tū Ora provides primary health through 60 different general practice teams and other health providers.

The PHO had publicly released information of the Vanda the God attack but, till now, had not released details about the wider hacks and security breaches.



Some immunisation information may have been breached.

FILE / NOT-FOR-SYNDICATION

Hefford said it planned to release this information on October 15 but that was brought forward after inquiries by *Stuff*.

Ministry of Health director general of health Ashley Bloomfield confirmed the Ministry was notified.

All PHOs and health boards were ordered to review their "external facing" cyber security and report back by October 8.



Nearly 1 million medical files may have been hacked.

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Just four of New Zealand's 30 PHOs had responded by Friday, as had 12 of New Zealand's 20 health boards. None so far had reported issues but each would go through an independent assessment.

The Government Communications Security Bureau, which oversees cyber crime, had been involved in the case.

Privacy Commissioner John Edwards confirmed his office was notified and had worked with the PHO.



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tom.hunt@stuff.co.nz has set up a helpline - 0800 499 500 - set to go live from 7am Saturday morning, for people wanting to know more about the incident and how to access support. Overseas callers can dial +64 692 769 30.

## **IF YOU ARE CONCERNED**

\* Questions and answers will be posted on its website. People distressed or anxious about the situation can dial 1737.

\* It is not yet possible for individual people to find out what information Tū Ora holds on them and there is not yet any way to opt out of GPs collecting the data.

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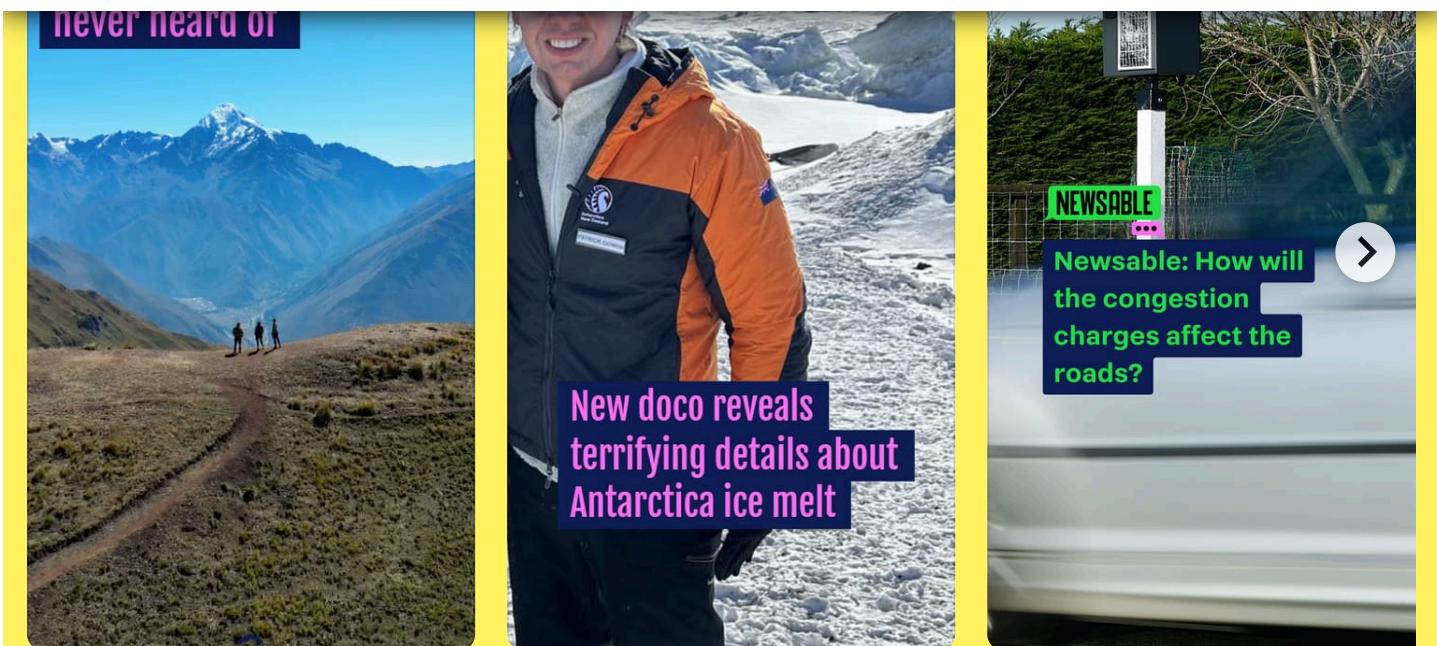
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