

10 September 2020

Rene Clough

By email: fyi-request-13593-dfce7d7e@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202006524

Dear Rene Clough

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 19 August 2020 to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry).

Information in response to your questions can be found below. These are responded to under the titles of 1, 2, 3, and 4 as you have used in your request.

- 1. How many people tested positive for Covid-19 received the Influenza Vaccine within the previous 6 months? (yes I know they are on different systems but it is very easy to match them up - as a database tester I know how easy it is to do).*

Flu immunisation data and COVID-19 data are held in separate systems that cannot interface. To provide this information would involve sharing patient-identifiable information across Ministry directorates and cross-referencing this with the information in the National Immunisation Register. As such, I am unable to provide you with this information under section 18(g) of the Act as the information is not held by the Ministry or another agency subject to the Act.

- 2. How many people tested for Covid-19 were also tested for Influenza or any of the other coronaviruses (229E, NL63, OC43, and HKU1)? Were the lab tests just for Covid-19? If so why? As we already know that the RT-PCR test can and does detect all of the family of Coronaviruses.*

The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests COVID-19 used in New Zealand only detect SARS-CoV-2 because the PCR primers and probes were designed so that they only bind to unique SARS-COV-2 sequences found only on this virus and not any other viruses. A small minority of patients may have had additional separate PCR testing performed if they were hospitalised for other viruses such as influenza virus, RSV, Parainfluenza virus etc. The RT-PCR tests used in New Zealand cannot detect all of the family of Coronaviruses as it was not designed that way.

3. *As you have already declared on National TV that the RT-PCR test is not 100% accurate and does produce false positives, were each samples tested twice on each occasion? If there is a chance of a false positive then it's logical to retest every sample.*

The viral test is very accurate at identifying individuals who do not have COVID-19, this is known as being a high 'specificity' test. Very few, if any, false positive test results are expected.

4. *Did China supply the Ministry of Health the isolated genome sequence of the virus and the exact instructions on how to test for the Covid-19 virus? Was this independently validated and proven correct in NZ labs? Please supply proof of validity of the Covid-19 genome sequencing testing in NZ or supplied by China.*

Yes, China and other countries such as Germany and Australia did publish online the isolated genome sequence of the virus and the exact instructions on how to test for the COVID-19 virus. This was independently validated and proven correct in New Zealand laboratories. An example of one of the genome sequences which was obtained by sequencing one of the patient's sample at the Institute for Environmental Science and Research (ESR) is attached as Appendix one.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website.

Yours sincerely



Jane Kelley
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