

22 July 2021

Information regarding PCR Tests

I would like to request information regarding PCR tests. Would you please advise how many cycles of amplification are being used to process PCR tests for COVID-19?

There are many assays and platforms in use in Belfast Trust for molecular testing of SARS CoV2. Manufacturers set the total number of PCR cycles for each of those assays and there is no deviation from that within Belfast Trust. Standard PCRs that mostly employ Taqman chemistry, including SARS CoV2 assays, are either 40 or 45 cycles of PCR.

Would you also advise if every PCR test is analysed to find out which variant of COVID-19 has infected the person tested. If not, how does the Board discover which variant is infecting people in NI?

All SARS CoV2 positives that are suitable will undergo reflex Variant of Concern (VOC) testing AND whole genome sequencing to characterise the infecting SAR CoV2 genome. This data is available to the Public Health Agency.

I would also like to know which organisations hold the data for NI people regarding the results of the PCR tests. I would like to be advised of all of the organisations that this information is shared with.

In Health and Social Care laboratories, the results of PCR tests are recorded within the Laboratory Information System and electronically communicated from this system to the patients Electronic Care Record and to the Public Health Agency (PHA).

Enquiries regarding the management of data that is sent to the Public Health Agency should be directed to them.

If there are any organisations that I don't want to hold my personal data is it possible, under GDPR regulations, to make them delete any personal information that they hold about an individual.

I understand that our Data Protection colleagues have already replied to this point in an email sent direct to you on 30 June 2021.