

27 July 2021

## PCR Testing and Covid

I am asking these as I have seen something circulating claiming to be from your department, but would rather check it myself than believe everything I see.

How many cycles are the belfast city hospital running as standard in their PCR tests? (Also, what are these cycles?)

How many deaths were due to COVID-19 alone and no other comorbidities which are listed on the death certificate?

What is the average age of death due to COVID-19 from March 2020?

### RESPONSE:

I can confirm it was a genuine letter and the reply is laid out below.

#### Re: PCR Testing and Covid

I refer to your Freedom of Information (FOI) request received on 11 June 2021. Outlined below is Belfast Trust's response, which I hope you find helpful.

1. **I would be obliged if you could advise me under the Freedom of Information Act how many cycles the Belfast City Hospital are running as standard in their PCR Tests.**

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.

2. **How many deaths were due to Covid-19 alone and no other comorbidities which are listed on the Death Certificate**

For the time period 1 March 2020 to 30 June 2021 there were 2 cases that had COVID-19 recorded on part 1a of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and nothing else recorded in Parts 1b,1c or on Part 2.

3. **What is the average age of death from Covid-19 from March 2020 to date?**

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, in-patients who passed away and were identified as having COVID-19 recorded on Part 1 of their death certificate had an average age of 79 years.