

PCR Tests, Covid 19 Deaths and Deaths from SARScov2

1. Under the Freedom Of Information Act 2000, can you please advise me on how many cycles you preform the PCR test 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.

2. Please could you give me the number of deaths whereby Covid 19 is the sole cause of death listed, there were no other pre-existing conditions or comorbidities notes on the death certificate covering the period from March 2020 until present day?

Information contained in this response was gathered from two combined data sources - Mortality Pathway data exported from the Northern Ireland Electronic Care Record (NIECR)* and an export from the Public Health Agency (PHA) COVID-19 deaths reporting form database.

Deaths identified for the purpose of reporting:

*Any death identified with one or more of the following terminology included on any part of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and/or a COVID positive PCR test.

- Covid (pneumonia/pneumonitis)
- Covid19 (pneumonia/pneumonitis)
- Covid 19 (pneumonia/pneumonitis)
- Covid-19 (pneumonia/pneumonitis)
- SARS-Cov2 (pneumonia/pneumonitis)
- Coronavirus (pneumonia/pneumonitis)

o PHA reporting Criteria: Report all individuals who have died within 28 days of a first positive COVID-19 laboratory result (based on specimen date), whether or not COVID-19 was the cause of death.

o All other deaths in which COVID-19 is clinically suspected (i.e. without a positive laboratory test result) should be recorded on the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD).

From 1st March 2020 until 21st July 2021 inclusive, 10 cases had one of the above terms 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.

From 1st March 2020 until 21st July 2021 inclusive, there were a total of 459 cases identified who were reported to either the PHA and/or the Department of Health.

449 (97.8%) had one or more conditions/causes other than COVID-19 also recorded on the MCCD.

3. If the answer is any, can you provide the average age of deaths?

From 1st March 2020 until 21st July 2021 inclusive, from the 10 cases identified that had one of the above terms 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, the average age at time of death was 85 years of age.

4. Can you tell me how many persons under the age of 18 have been logged as a death from SARScov2 without any underlying health conditions?

From 1st March 2020 until 21st July 2021 inclusive there have been no cases logged of anyone under the age of 18 who passed away with any of the above terms recorded on their death certificate alone and no other conditions/causes indicated.