

16 February 2022

Covid-19 PCR Tests

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information:

- 1. Is the PCR test still being used in a hospital setting at present (February 2022)?**

Yes

- 2. What is the accuracy of the PCR when being used to diagnose a positive case of COVID-19?**

PCR is a highly specific and sensitive diagnostic method. However, false positives and negatives can occur with all technologies. There are, therefore, many mitigations in place to ensure the correct result is determined and to decrease the risk of incorrect results. This includes determining results based on Ct value, limits of detection, curve shape and fluorescence level where visible, and number of genes positive. Laboratory results should always be considered within a clinical context.

- 3. Does the PCR differentiate between the individual COVID-19 variants?**

There are specific genetic tests used on positive samples from inpatients to characterise variants.

- 4. If a lab technician has come into contact with a PCR test that was used on a COVID-19 patient, is there a period of self-isolation required for that individual?**

We are not sure what this question is trying to address. All Laboratory staff adhere to standard operating procedures for the safe receipt and handling of specimens for analysis.

- 5. Does the PCR also test for influenza a and b, as well being used to diagnose COVID-19?**

PCR assays are designed for each virus and are specific to that virus.

- 6. Are there separate PCR tests to differentiate between influenza a and b, separately from COVID-19?**

Yes

- 7. Does a patient who has had influenza a or b test positive for COVID-19 on a PCR test?**

People who have or had influenza will not generate a false SARS CoV2 positive result.

- 8. Does the Innova PCR test still get used at this present moment (3rd February)?**

We do not know where Innova tests are being used specifically.