

## **PCR Cycles and Covid/Influenza Death Statistics**

### **1. How many standard cycles does the Belfast City Hospital run when using a PCR test for infectious diseases? Notably SARS CoV2?**

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 have between March 2020 and July 2021 are linked to Covid-19 alone without other comorbidities listed on the death certificate (i.e. Part 1a of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death with nothing in Parts 1b, 1c and 2)?**

From 1st March 2020 to 30th June 2021 inclusive, there were 10 cases reported 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.

From 1st March 2019 to 30th June 2021 inclusive, there were a total of 455 cases identified who were reported to either the PHA and/or the Department of Health - 445 (97.8%) had one or more conditions/causes other than COVID-19 also recorded on the MCCD. There were additional cases, less than 5, reported to the PHA and/or the Department of Health who did not have any of the above terms on any part of their MCCD but had a positive PCR test within the previous 28 days prior to death.

Use of less than five: We are unable to provide an exact figure - exempt from release under Section 40(2) of the FOI Act - as this could make patients personally identifiable. Disclosure would constitute a breach of the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

### **3. How many deaths have between March 2020 and July 2021 are linked to influenza A or B without other comorbidities listed on the death certificate? (I.e. Part 1a of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death with nothing in Parts 1b, 1c and 2)**

From 1st March 2020 to 30th June 2021 inclusive, there were no cases recorded onto NIECR that had either "Flu" or "Influenza" stated 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 to 30th June 2021 inclusive, there were 8 cases recorded that had either "Flu" or "Influenza" stated on Part 1 of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death but had other causes/conditions listed also.

Note: Information contained in the responses to questions 2 and 3 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)
  
- 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.
  
- 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).