

03 October 2022

Rheumatoid Arthritis patients who have died of covid

Request

- **Number of RA (Rheumatoid Arthritis) patients who have died of covid**
- **Number of RA patients who have died of covid who were receiving biologic therapy**
- **Number of RA patients who have died of covid who were receiving Rituximab biologic therapy in particular**
- **Number of RA patients who have died of covid who had only just commenced Rituximab biologic therapy at any point during the pandemic**

Response

The Rheumatology service within the Belfast Trust is only able to respond with data pertaining to patients treated within our service and does not have access to regional data. A preliminary investigation has identified the following:

- 1) **Number of RA (Rheumatoid Arthritis) patients who have died of COVID:**
There is no database for all patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis within BHSCT, the number of RA patients who have died of COVID cannot be collated by currently held data.
- 2) **Number of RA patients who have died of COVID who were receiving biologic therapy:** A review of the biologics database has identified 40 patients on biologics (excluding Rituximab) who died during the pandemic. Information on which of those patients died of COVID cannot be collated by currently held data. A comprehensive clinical case note and electronic care record trawl would be required which cannot be completed within 18 hours. This would exceed the costs limit specified in the FOI act.

We estimate that compliance with this (element of the) request for information would exceed the appropriate costs limit. Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information 2000, the limit has been specified as £450 and represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.

03 October 2022

- 3) Number of RA patients who have died of COVID who were receiving Rituximab biologic therapy in particular: <5 patients.

We are unable to provide an exact figure where numbers are very low. To provide this level of information would reduce numbers to discoverable limits where the patients could be identifiable.

This is exempt from release under section 40(2) Personal Information relating to a third party, of the FOI Act.

- 4) Number of RA patients who have died of COVID who had only just commenced Rituximab biologic therapy at any point during the pandemic: <5 patients.

We are unable to provide an exact figure where numbers are very low. To provide this level of information would reduce numbers to discoverable limits where the patients could be identifiable.

This is exempt from release under section 40(2) Personal Information relating to a third party, of the FOI Act.