

4 February 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202200120

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 5 January 2022 for information related to COVID-19 PCR testing. I will respond to each part of your request in turn:

Please provide the complete section(s) of RNA code which is detected by the RT-PCR test for Covid-19 and somehow identify the areas where the differences occur between the variants.

Please provide the different sections of code (under those which are tested) for each of the 3 main variants of concern, alpha, delta and omicron.

Please provide a full disclosure explanation of how a positive NAAT RT-PCR test shows a positive case of Covid-19 after detecting a nominal amount of nucleic acid which belong to a virus rather than showing that the person is indeed infected with a replicating virus.

Please also provide a full disclosure explanation of how an asymptomatic case has been deemed to be infectious. Quoting a RT-PCR test here is insufficient as it only shows that genetic material from the searched for nucleic acid is present, not that there is any further infection. As confirmed by CDC, Dr Fauci and others the NAAT doesn't prove that the tested person is infectious only that they carry the genetic material that was tested for by the NAAT.

On 20 January 2022, these parts of your request were transferred to the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) in accordance with section 14(b)(ii) of the Act. You can expect a response from ESR in due course.

There must have be some discussion to decide that an asymptomatic person who carries genetic material (shown by the RT-PCR test) from what could be either a replicating virus or a non-replicating virus is a "positive" covid case. Please provide the documentation for this discussion. Also please provide the documents showing that it isn't necessary for a Doctor to check the patient for signs of illness to confirm this "positive case

A person with a positive PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 virus is deemed to have COVID-19 regardless of symptoms, in the first instance. Where there is a weak positive PCR result the possibility of an historical case arises, and further investigation is undertaken. This includes a

review of the clinical information such as history of previous infection, presence of symptoms, and further laboratory tests are undertaken if indicated. This is followed by a discussion among infectious disease, public health and microbiology specialists with the aim of classifying the person as either an acute infectious case, an historical case or a post-acute infectious case. The decision on whether a physical examination is required would be made by the clinician on a case-by-case basis and is usually not needed. Someone can have a viral infection, including COVID-19, with a few symptoms on questioning but have very little to find clinically on physical examination. This is the case for many viral respiratory tract infections.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Health website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of two distinct, stylized parts.

Dom Harris
**Manager - Office of the Deputy Chief Executive
COVID-19 Health System Response**