

UK COVID-19 Inquiry - M2/SAGE/01/RJL

1. I am an Infectious Diseases Specialist at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. I trained in the UK but have been employed at UKZN since 2017. My qualifications are listed below.

INSTITUTION	DEGREE	END DATE MM/YYYY
University of Aberdeen	BSc(MedSci)	07/1997
University of Aberdeen	MB ChB	07/1999
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh	MRCP(UK)	04/2002
University of Liverpool	DTM&H	12/2006
Society of Apothecaries	DipHIVMed	10/2007
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	PhD	03/2015
General Medical Council	CCT	10/2014

I was a member of the Network for Genomic Surveillance South Africa (NGS-SA) which was responsible for the genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in South Africa during the current pandemic. Our network detected and reported the Beta and Omicron variants of concern (key publications listed below). I also coordinated the clinical, epidemiology and modelling subgroup of the South African national SARS-CoV-2 variants consortium.

Tegally H, Wilkinson E, Giovanetti M, et al. Detection of a SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern in South Africa. Nature. 2021 Apr;592(7854):438-443. PubMed PMID: 33690265.

Viana R, Moyo S, Amoako DG, et al. Rapid epidemic expansion of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant in southern Africa. Nature. 2022 Mar;603(7902):679-686. PubMed PMID: 35042229

Full list of publications available at
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/myncbi/richard.lessells.2/bibliography/public/>

2. I participated in a single SAGE meeting (SAGE 97, 29 November 2021) at the invitation of the Government Chief Scientific Advisor
3. I participated in SAGE 97 with my colleague Professor Tulio de Oliveira at the invitation of the Government Chief Scientific Advisor. We attended to provide information about the Omicron variant of concern that had been detected in South Africa and Botswana. We provided a brief summary of what was known at that time about Omicron in South Africa.
4. We gave a short PowerPoint presentation summarizing key understanding about Omicron at that time
5. I have not written any articles, given interviews or given evidence regarding the work of SAGE or about the UK's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have given multiple interviews about South Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global response more generally, and specifically about variants of concern (Beta and Omicron).
6. I cannot comment on the work of SAGE in general, as I was only present for one meeting as an external expert providing information on a specific topic (Omicron variant of concern)

7. I cannot comment on the lessons to be learned, except to say that SAGE and specifically the Government Chief Scientific Advisor and Government Chief Medical Advisor were particularly appreciative of the engagement with South African scientists and the early sharing of information about variants of concern. Aside from our involvement with SAGE, we had other interactions with the Chief Scientific Advisor and Chief Medical Advisor, their teams, and other UK scientists around the time of the detection of the Beta variant, Omicron variant and Omicron subvariants (BA.4 and BA.5).
8. I may have a copy of the PowerPoint that we presented at SAGE 97 (or Professor de Oliveira may have this). Otherwise I hold no other specific materials relating to these matters.