

Message

From: McBride, Michael [/O=NIGOV/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=99999965]
Sent: 28/03/2020 14:24:30
To: Pengelly, Richard [richard.pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk]
CC: Gordon, David [david.gordon@health-ni.gov.uk]; Geoghegan, Lourda [lourda.geoghegan@health-ni.gov.uk]
Subject: PHA : COVID-19 daily testing figures

Richard

Have spoken with Lourda who is just now following up. I will discuss with her following those discussions and revert to you thereafter.

Michael

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Pengelly, Richard <Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk>
Date: Saturday, 28 Mar 2020, 12:49 pm
To: McBride, Michael <Michael.McBride@health-ni.gov.uk>
Cc: Gordon, David <David.Gordon@health-ni.gov.uk>, Geoghegan, Lourda <Lourda.Geoghegan@health-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: PHA : COVID-19 daily testing figures

M

Can we get a word about how best I can move to sort this - maybe we need to think about extreme measures. But it needs done urgently - it is becoming a confidence issue for the Minister.

R.

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: DoH Minister <minister@health-ni.gov.uk>
Date: Saturday, 28 Mar 2020, 12:43 pm
To: Pengelly, Richard <Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk>
Cc: McBride, Michael <Michael.McBride@health-ni.gov.uk>, DoH SpAd <spad@health-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: PHA : COVID-19 daily testing figures

Richard,

The issue with PHA and their reporting, needs fixed & fixed now, this is now a mill stone around all our necks, can we pull the daily surveillance report into the Department?

regards,

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health.

From: DoH SpAd <spad@health-ni.gov.uk>

Date: Saturday, 28 Mar 2020, 11:52 am

To: Gordon, David <David.Gordon@health-ni.gov.uk>, Hugo Van Woerden <Hugo.VanWoerden@hscni.net>, Brid Farrell <Brid.Farrell@hscni.net>, Wilson, Stephen (PHA) <Stephen.Wilson@hscni.net>, DoH Minister <minister@health-ni.gov.uk>, Pengelly, Richard <Richard.Pengelly@health-ni.gov.uk>, Geoghegan, Lourda <Lourda.Geoghegan@health-ni.gov.uk>, **NR** <NR@health-ni.gov.uk>, **NR** <NR@health-ni.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: COVID-19 daily testing figures

Thanks David, suggest no response is issued until we get exactly to the bottom of what is really going on here.

There are serious discrepancies in what the Minister is being told and what is actually happening. I also continue to have serious concerns about the quality of information being published in the daily PHA surveillance report.

Hugo/Brid - the Minister & I both asked for clarity yesterday, and with all respect we didn't get it. I was even told yesterday that's it's not the time to be getting into the detail. It is.

It is my understanding that on the 17th March in a teleconference between DoH, public health and virology it was agreed to expand the categories for priority testing to include 1) healthcare workers and 2) tests requested by medical director or nominated senior person. Silver was notified of this change that evening. Silver was then tasked to do a quick turnaround piece to define exactly who was to be in the HCW group. Laboratory services I believe were also agreeable to expanding the testing groups.

I am concerned by the email from PHA press office to DoH press office yesterday. Does that mean, as it tends to suggest, that HCW testing is not being covered by the surveillance?

I asked the question yesterday, but it wasn't answered, so I'll ask again - how many HCWs across Northern Ireland have been tested to date?

Can we have confirmation that the expansion for testing agreed 11 days ago was relayed to Trusts and has been fully implemented?

Can we also have confirmation that all testing, including those carried out by the Trusts, is being reported through the daily surveillance report? It was concerning that the Northern Trust had reported a nil increase in testing in yesterday's report, even though I believe they commenced their own testing on Wednesday.

These are direct questions which we now require direct answers to.

Mark

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From: Gordon, David <David.Gordon@health-ni.gov.uk>

Date: Saturday, 28 Mar 2020, 8:16 am

To: DoH SpAd <spad@health-ni.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: COVID-19 daily testing figures

See below

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: DoH Press Office <PressOffice@health-ni.gov.uk>

Date: Friday, 27 Mar 2020, 1:17 pm

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, Gordon, David <David.Gordon@health-ni.gov.uk>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>, [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@health-ni.gov.uk)>

Subject: FW: COVID-19 daily testing figures

See below

From: [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]@hscni.net]

Sent: 27 March 2020 13:14

To: DoH Press Office <PressOffice@health-ni.gov.uk>

Subject: FW: COVID-19 daily testing figures

"This email is covered by the disclaimer found at the end of the message."

Hi all,

Please see the below. Our surveillance system covers the following, but perhaps the Minister was talking about wider testing, which may include patients who don't meet the case definitions below.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

The current surveillance systems include:

1. Virology laboratory reports of COVID-19 test results

Currently, COVID-19 testing is performed for:

Patients:

- requiring admission to hospital (a hospital practitioner has decided that admission to hospital is required with an expectation that the patient will need to stay at least one night)

AND

- have either clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia

OR

- acute respiratory distress syndrome

OR

- influenza like illness (fever $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ and at least one of the following respiratory symptoms, which must be of acute onset: persistent cough (with or without sputum), hoarseness, nasal discharge or congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing, sneezing)

- Data source: Regional Virus Laboratory (RVL) and local laboratories (as outlined in the surveillance bulletin)

- Reporting frequency: Laboratory data is submitted to PHA twice daily

- Reporting period: Data is extracted at 0915 every morning and reflects the previous 24 hour period

- Analysis: Testing summary (including positivity percentage), age and sex breakdown, mapping
2. Intensive care unit/high dependency unit (ICU/HDU) laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases
- Case definition: An individual with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis admitted to or currently in critical care (ICU and HDU) in Northern Ireland
 - Data source: Critical Care Network for Northern Ireland (CCaNNI)
 - Reporting frequency: Daily
 - Reporting period: 10:30 am (cases reported at 10:30am are individuals newly diagnosed in the previous 24 hours)
 - Analysis: Currently number of cases in ICU per day
3. Clinician reported deaths
- Case definition: Patients who have died within 28 days of first positive test result, whether or not COVID-19 was the cause of death
 - Data source: Regional online reporting system (live from 27th March 2020) and notifications to PHA Health Protection duty room
 - Reporting frequency: Daily
 - Reporting period: 09.30 am (cases reported by 09:30am are individuals who have died in the previous 24 hours)
 - Analysis: currently number of COVID-19 associated deaths per day

From: PHA Corporate and Public Affairs

Sent: 27 March 2020 13:08

To: [NR]; [NR]; [NR]; [NR]; [NR]; [NR]

Subject: FW: COVID-19 daily testing figures

From: [NR]

Sent: 27 March 2020 13:08:12 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London

To: PHA Corporate and Public Affairs

Subject: FW: COVID-19 daily testing figures

Hi CPA,

PHA Reception put a call through to me. I couldn't get the details because I was on a tele-call with the PHA R&D team so told [NR] this is a press office query and gave my email address and asked [NR] to email me to forward. Please see her query below.

Grateful if someone could advise re response for this and get back to [NR] I'm happy to support in any way, thanks.

Best,

[NR]

From: [NR] [mailto:[NR] I&S]

Sent: 27 March 2020 12:50

To: [NR]

Cc: orna@factcheckni.org; editor@factcheckni.org

Subject: COVID-19 daily testing figures

Good afternoon [NR]

Many thanks for your help and lovely to speak with you just now. Apologies for disturbing your teleconference!

As briefly discussed, I work for [Factcheck NI](#) and am undertaking some research into the discrepancy between two sets of figures regarding COVID-19 daily testing in Northern Ireland. On Tuesday 24th March, the Health Minister told the Assembly that according to figures updated as of Monday 23rd March, they were *'doing over 600 tests per day in the regional virus reference laboratory'* (<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2020/03/24&docID=299356>). The Public Health Agency Surveillance Report stated that on the 23rd March, there was 297 tests being carried out in the region (https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-03/COVID-19%20Daily_bulletin_DoH_240320_0.pdf).

Could you please advise on why this discrepancy exists, which is the accurate figure and how the raw data is collected?

My number is I&S if you'd prefer to call to discuss.

Many thanks for your help again and will look forward to hearing from someone in the Press Office.

Best wishes,

NR

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