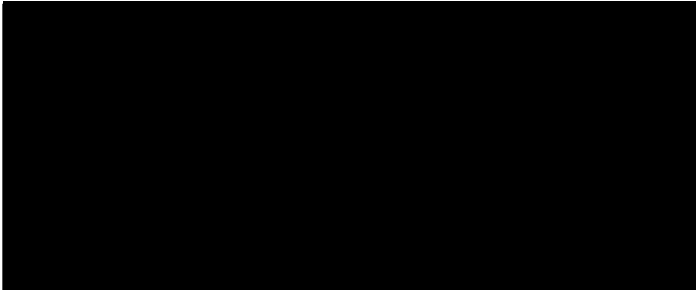


26 May 2020



Re **Official Information Request – Lab testing of COVID 19 swabs**

I refer to your official information request dated 3 May 2020 requesting the following information:

Under the Official Information Act 1982 can I please be provided with the following information, dating back to the start of February (or alternatively the date when the first Covid-19 swab test was carried out for a person in the Auckland Regional Public Health Service area).

1. How many tests for Covid-19 have been carried out (ie swabs or other tests initiated) in the ARPHS area?
2. How many of these tests within the ARPHS area have been discarded / not completed by a lab?
Can you please specify how many tests were not processed / completed because of a decision made by an ARPHS Medical Officer of Health, and how many were decided by someone else eg at a lab?
3. Can these rejected / discarded tests please be broken down into the reasons given for rejecting the test e.g. not meeting the case definition (and if so in what way eg lack of relevant travel history, insufficient symptoms etc), or some other reason eg swab faulty, or not carried out correctly etc.

Can this information please be broken down on a weekly basis, eg:

Week 1: XX tests carried out, X tests discarded at the decision of a Medical officer of health. Of these, X were due to lack of relevant travel history, x due to incorrect or no symptoms, x due to lack of contact with confirmed case, x due to faulty swab
Week 2: XX tests carried out, X tests discarded. Of these, X were due to lack of relevant travel history, x due to incorrect or no symptoms, x due to lack of contact with confirmed case etc.

I'm sending this OIA to ARPHS as it's my understanding these decisions are made at a Public Health Unit level by Medical Officers of Health. If this is incorrect and it would be easier to direct my queries individually to DHBs, please let me know and I can amend the request.

The statutory framework focuses on the role of Medical Officers of Health in managing infectious diseases in the community; however the reality in respect to COVID-19 was that powers in the Health Act, the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act and Epidemic Preparedness Act were managed by the Ministry of Health with regional assistance. In Auckland that regional assistance was co-ordinated by the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC), an ad hoc group resourced from the DHBs and other providers in the region. The the information you requested is held by NRHCC.

In providing this response, as your request was addressed to ARPHS an ADHB service, we have been able to collate the information set out below from information provided by NRHCC.

- a) *How many tests for Covid-19 have been carried out (ie swabs or other tests initiated) in the ARPHS area?*

As at 1400 on 20 May 2020, 91,190 tests have been processed for residents in the Auckland region.

- b) *How many of these tests within the ARPHS area have been discarded / not completed by a lab?*

In the early part of the COVID-19 response, Medical Officer of Health approval was required for all tests. For LabPlus (the laboratory at Auckland Hospital), there were 34 tests not processed as they arrived without approval and did not meet the case definition. The specific reasons were not collected but they were all tests that did not meet the case definition requirements in place at the time. We do not have information for other laboratories, for example LabTests, but expect the numbers to be similarly small in the overall context.

Six swabs are recorded as being unable to be tested for technical reasons. In these cases a recollection was advised. Again, we do not have information for other community laboratories but would expect similarly small numbers.

Taken together, these 40 swabs represent <0.1% of the over 50,000 swabs processed by LabPlus.

- c) *Can you please specify how many tests were not processed / completed because of a decision made by an ARPHS Medical Officer of Health, and how many were decided by someone else eg at a lab?*

All swabs taken were processed by the receiving labs apart from the forty noted in b).

There were 8,657 people recorded as having presented to either a Community Based Assessment Centre (CBAC) or general practice for a test who were not swabbed from 19 March to 17 May 2020. In the early stages of the response, the majority of these were people who did not meet the case definition. From 20 April, CBACs were instructed to test all people who requested a swab in line with updated Ministry of Health advice. From that point on, the number of people non-swabbed reduced to about 1.0%, mostly due to people declining the test.

- d) *Can these rejected / discarded tests please be broken down into the reasons given for rejecting the test e.g. not meeting the case definition (and if so in what way eg lack of relevant travel history, insufficient symptoms etc), or some other reason eg swab faulty, or not carried out correctly etc.*

As above, no tests were rejected / discarded apart from the six unable to be processed for technical reasons and the 34 that arrived at the lab without appropriate approval in the early part of the response. However, there were a number who were not offered swabs due to not meeting the case

definition in place at the time, or individuals who declined swabbing when offered. More detailed information on the reasons for people not getting a swab is not available. As in our response to c), the majority prior to 20 April were due to not meeting some aspect of the case definition that was in place at the time, and since that time due to a mixture of clinical judgement, patient declining a swab or other reasons.

The table attached provides as much information as NRHCC has available.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive

Week beginning	CBAC			GP			Total			Notes:
	People not swabbed	People Presented	%	People not swabbed	People Presented	%	People not swabbed	People Presented	%	
22/03/2020	626	1261	49.6%	104	629	16.5%	730	1890	38.6%	1
29/03/2020	2257	5453	41.4%	335	1934	17.3%	2592	7387	35.1%	1
05/04/2020	1483	7354	20.2%	500	2316	21.6%	1983	9670	20.5%	1
12/04/2020	699	5334	13.1%	518	2996	17.3%	1217	8330	14.6%	1
19/04/2020	545	6468	8.4%	477	5780	8.3%	1022	12248	8.3%	1
26/04/2020	84	7193	1.2%	244	1876	13.0%	328	9069	3.6%	2
03/05/2020	97	7013	1.4%	273	3466	7.9%	370	10479	3.5%	2
10/05/2020	64	10605	0.6%	106	1852	5.7%	170	12457	1.4%	3
17/05/2020	89	8527	1.0%	156	4386	3.6%	245	12913	1.9%	3
Total	5944	59208	10.0%	2713	25235	10.8%	8657	84443	10.3%	

Notes:

- 1 Not swabbed due to not meeting case definition - Case definition changed periodically
- 2 Not swabbed are individuals that most likely declined
- 3 Not swabbed are individuals that more than likely declined - asymptomatic surveillance swabbing commenced