

National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) Subgroup on Diagnostic Testing Approaches

Meeting 1 - Thursday 30/04/2020 – 9:30am by teleconference

In attendance:

- Dr Alan Smith - Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH (Chair)
- Dr Cillian De Gascun - Director, National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), UCD
- Dr Máirín Ryan - Director of HTA, HIQA
- Professor Martin Cormican - National Clinical Lead Healthcare Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance Team, HSE (AMRIC)
- Dr Lorraine Doherty - National Clinical Director for Health Protection, HPSC
- Dr Derval Igoe - Specialist in Public Health Medicine, HPSC
- Professor Colm Bergin - Consultant Infectious Diseases, St. James's Hospital
- Dr Mary Keogan - National Clinical Lead, National Clinical Programme for Pathology, HSE
- Judith Martin - In Vitro Diagnostic Lead, Assessment & Surveillance, Medical Devices, HPRA
- Philip Kelly - Scientific Officer, Medical Devices, HPRA
- Mary Hyland - Medicines and Medical Devices Criticality Group, DoH
- Karen McNamara - Medicines and Medical Devices Criticality Group, DoH
- Evette Wade - Population Screening & Chronic Disease Unit, DoH (Secretariat)
- Luke Kearney - Population Screening & Chronic Disease Unit, DoH (Secretariat)

Apologies:

- Dr Colm Henry - Chief Clinical Officer, HSE

1. Welcome and Introductions.

All members gave a brief introduction and an outline of their roles.

2. Conflict of Interest Declaration.

The Chair asked all members to complete and return a conflict of interest form.

3. Terms of Reference.

The title of the subgroup was discussed. It was agreed to change the current name of the group in order to better reflect its role in setting out a national testing strategy or framework rather than focusing on alternative testing methods.

It was also agreed to review the wording of the first two paragraphs to clearly set out the scope of the group and provide clarity on the relationship with the HSE.

Action: Chair to contact HSE to ensure no duplication of work & change title of group, the wording of the Terms of Reference document.

4. Update on HIQA Rapid HTA.

HIQA provided background information on the Rapid HTA of alternative diagnostic testing for coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which was published on 22 April 2020.

5. A Strategy Outline.

Point 5.3: The importance of collaboration on test performance data/validation studies was discussed by the group. The significant workload in obtaining ethical approval and lack of resources to enable the sharing of information was raised.

Point 5.6: The National Action Plan on COVID-19 refers to repeated seroprevalence studies

Point 5.8: The group discussed the importance of having a contact in the HSE who would take the lead from an operational perspective on the implementation of a national testing strategy.

Action: Chair to contact the HSE re. implementation.

A wide-ranging discussion took place on the potential challenges and operational difficulties.

The group discussed using serology as evidence of exposure to COVID-19, particularly in the case of HCW's.

The group discussed an expansion of membership to share expertise and ensure no duplication of work. The Chair informed the group that he was satisfied with the skills and expertise on the group and that his preference was to establish the scope of the group first and to make contact with the HSE re. implementation. The Subgroup will ultimately report to the NPHE.

The capacity of testing sites and the availability of different nucleic acid tests and reagents was discussed as well as efforts by the HSE Procurement team to obtain this equipment.

The group agreed to the importance of establishing the what, the why and when for each test as the basis for a national testing strategy.

The name and the scope of the Subgroup was discussed.

Action: Chair will invite the input of subgroup members on specific issues raised on today's call.

6. Correspondence & other documentation (for information).

The Chair brought the groups attention to the documents contained in their meeting pack.

The meeting concluded with the Chair thanking all members for their time and contributions.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 7th May 2020 @ 9:30am.