



UCD National Virus
Reference Laboratory

Saotharlann Náisiúnta
Tagartha Viris UCD

PO Box 12653
University College Dublin
Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

T: +353 1 716 4401
F: +353 1 269 7611

Bosca Poist 12653
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath
Belfield, Baile Átha Cliath 4, Éire

E-mail: nvrl@ucd.ie
Web: nvrl.ucd.ie

Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health
Block 1 Miesian Plaza
50-58 Lower Baggot Street

March 2nd, 2020

Dear Tony

Many thanks for your letter dated February 26th, regarding the testing - during containment - of asymptomatic contacts of confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Ireland.

This issue was discussed by the EAG at its meeting last week (February 26th). While there was a general consensus (albeit not unanimous) that testing of asymptomatic close contacts is likely to constitute an important mechanism of characterising the true extent of SARS CoV 2 in Ireland, it was also recognised by the group that we do not yet have sufficient evidence to inform the structure of such a programme.

Specifically, there are two questions that the group needs to address before making a recommendation to NPHET:

- 1) If asymptomatic close contacts are to be tested, with what frequency and at which time points during the contact's potential incubation period should the testing be performed.
- 2) If SARS CoV 2 RNA is detected in an asymptomatic close contact, what is the subsequent management pathway (e.g. isolation, treatment, contact-tracing) for that individual.

A data collection exercise is ongoing that I believe will allow the group to review these questions at its meeting this week (March 4th), following which I will revert to NPHET.

Should cases be identified in Ireland before EAG addresses these issues, the Group advises that testing of close contacts could be considered, depending on the specifics of the case.

Kind regards

Cillian De Gascun
MD, FRCPI, FRCPath (Virology), FFPATH RCPI
Chairperson, 2019-nCoV Expert Advisory Group

Consultant Virologist & Laboratory Director
Medical Council Registration Number 022549