

Freedom of Information Request

Ref: 21-017

13 January 2021

By Email

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Trust's response is as follows:

- We can confirm that we do hold the information you are requesting

Please can you advise why you do not hold data on the number of patients who have died from other respiratory illnesses such as influenza, pneumonia, flu etc? (except covid-19) during this timeframe?

-None of the systems we use in our hospitals sre designed to capture cause of death. This is what the coroner does.

I quote, As per Guidance for doctors completing Medical Certificates of Cause of Death in England and Wales. (Link provided)

<https://smex->

[ctp.trendmicro.com:443/wis/clicktime/v1/query?url=https%3a%2f%2fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2fgovernment%2fuploads%2fsystem%2fuploads%2fattachment%5fdata%2ffile%2f877302%2fguidance%2dfor%2ddoctors%2dcompleting%2dmedical%2dcertificates%2dof%2dcause%2dof%2ddeath%2dcovid%2d19.pdf&umid=1726d8bd-0bd1-414d-a024-e33aab517b00&auth=cc0d65b297f78cadd748671f4f5cc83a2a10d9c6-90c6800498dd745ae15cca2204fc29d5cfcc0e28](https://smex-ctp.trendmicro.com:443/wis/clicktime/v1/query?url=https%3a%2f%2fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2fgovernment%2fuploads%2fsystem%2fuploads%2fattachment%5fdata%2ffile%2f877302%2fguidance%2dfor%2ddoctors%2dcompleting%2dmedical%2dcertificates%2dof%2dcause%2dof%2ddeath%2dcovid%2d19.pdf&umid=1726d8bd-0bd1-414d-a024-e33aab517b00&auth=cc0d65b297f78cadd748671f4f5cc83a2a10d9c6-90c6800498dd745ae15cca2204fc29d5cfcc0e28)

It states; In an emergency period, any doctor can complete the MCCD, when it is impractical for the attending doctor to do so. This may, for example, be when the attending doctor is self-isolating, unwell, or has pressure to attend patients. In these circumstances, it may be practical to allow a medical examiner or recently retired doctor returning to work to complete the MCCD.

Please advise why Bristol & Weston do not hold this data when it states this is a requirement by the doctor or other medical practitioners and not a coroner?

If a patient died of cancer or heart disease are you advising that you do not hold this data as the cause of death, if so what happens to this patient and the recording of their

death? or does this only apply to respiratory illnesses?

Are all deaths being referred to a coroner for cause of death?

I refer you to section 4.4 of the guidance for medical certificates of cause of death in England & Wales. - 4.4 Never use 'natural causes' alone

The term "natural causes" alone, with no specification of any disease on a doctor's MCCD, is not sufficient to allow the death to be registered without referral to the coroner. If you do not have any idea what disease caused your patient's death, it is up to the coroner to decide what investigations may be needed.

So by your response it suggests to me that you might be implying you're not holding data on causes of deaths as you do not know causes of death of all patient deaths when referring to respiratory illnesses?

Why is it that Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust have provided the data on other respiratory illnesses? Are you advising Bristol & Weston operates differently to other hospitals, is their not a set practice that the NHS follows?

Prior to January 2020 did you hold data on the number of patients who have died of other respiratory illnesses? (except covid-19)

-No.

Am I incorrect to believe that the ONS collates cause of death information from NHS providers?

In 2020 have you compiled patient deaths of all respiratory illnesses including covid-19 as one category?

-The coroner does this.

So are you advising that the coroner categorises all respiratory illnesses as one cause of death and doesn't differentiate between patient illnesses?

We do capture the cause of death for all of our patients. We are not disclosing the information to your previous request due to the cause of death not being captured on any of the systems we use, someone would have to go through each individual medical record in conjunction with the coroner's report and this would take more than 18 hours.

Please note, the Trust does not hold the data in a format that would enable us to fully respond to your request to the level of detail required and a manual trawl for this information would significantly exceed the 18 hours limit set down by the FOI as the reasonable limit. Section 12 of the FOIA provides that we are not obliged to spend in excess of 18 hours in any sixty day period locating, retrieving and identifying information in order to deal with a request for information and therefore we are withholding this information at this time.

This concludes our response. We trust that you find this helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact us directly if we can be of any further assistance.

If, after that, you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Director of Corporate Governance
University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Marlborough Street
Bristol
BS1 3NU

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Publication

Please note that this letter and the information included/attached will be published on our website as part of the Trust's Freedom of Information Publication Log. This is because information disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act is disclosed to the public, not just to the individual making the request. We will remove any personal information (such as your name, email and so on) from any information we make public to protect your personal information.

To view the Freedom of Information Act in full please click [here](#).

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Team
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