



Department of Health & Social Care

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

www.gov.uk/dhsc

Mr Athanasios Kandias
[request-701707-135425ec@whatdotheyknow.com](#)

23 November 2020

Dear Mr Kandias,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1266157

Thank you for your request dated 25 October 2020 in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

Subject: Freedom of Information request - Documents held showing SARS-COV2 has been isolated and causes COVID-19

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I wish to be provided with the following information: All records in the possession, custody or control of DHSC, describing the isolation of a SARS-COV-2 virus, directly from a sample taken from a diseased patient, where the patient sample was not first combined with any other source of genetic material (i.e. monkey kidney cells aka vero cells; liver cancer cells).

Please note that I am using isolation in the every-day sense of the word: the act of separating a thing(s) from everything else. I am not requesting records where isolation of SARS-COV-2 refers *instead* to:

- ***the culturing of something, or***
- ***the performance of an amplification test (i.e. a PCR test), or***
- ***the sequencing of something.***

Please also note that my request is not limited to records that were authored by the DHSC or that pertain to work done by the DHSC. My request includes any sort of record, for example (but not limited to) any published peer-reviewed study that the DHSC has downloaded or printed.

Please provide enough information about each record so that I may identify and access each record with certainty (i.e. title, author(s), date, journal, where the public may access it).

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

DHSC does not hold this information.

However, outside of the scope of the FOIA, and on a discretionary basis, the following information has been advised to us about the isolation of a SARS-COV-2 virus, which may be of interest:

Most infectious diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria or fungi. Some bacteria or fungi have the capacity to grow on their own in isolation, for example in colonies on a petri dish. Viruses are different in that they are what we call “obligate pathogens” – that is, they cannot survive or reproduce without infecting a host. An explainer of these different types of pathogen (disease

causing agents) can be found from BMC Biology here:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5648414/>

For some diseases, it is possible to establish causation between a microorganism and a disease by isolating the pathogen from a patient, growing it in pure culture and reintroducing it to a healthy organism. These are known as “Koch’s postulates” and were developed in 1884. However, as our understanding of disease and different disease-causing agents has advanced, these are no longer the method for determining disease causation. It has long been known that viral diseases cannot be identified in this way as viruses cannot be grown in ‘pure culture’. When a patient is tested for a viral illness, this is normally done by looking for the presence of antigens, or viral genetic code in a host with molecular biology techniques.

If you have any queries in relation to the above discretionary information, we suggest that you contact the Government Office for Science (Go-Science). FOI requests may be submitted to Go-Science at contact@go-science.gov.uk.

You may be aware that Go-Science regularly publishes the scientific evidence supporting the UK Government response to Covid-19 on the GOV.UK website at this link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-office-for-science>

World Health Organisation research information is also available here (by following the links ‘Research and Development’ > ‘Global research database’):

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019?gclid=EAlalQobChMIv6Hs2pnF6QIVD-3tCh3KqwfMEAAAYASAAEgLuB_D_BwE

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to appeal by asking for an internal review. This should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter and sent to FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk, or to the address at the top of this letter.

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

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may complain directly to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already appealed our original response and received our internal review decision. You should raise your concerns with the ICO within three months of your last meaningful contact with us.

The ICO can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Crowe

Freedom of Information Officer
E: freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk