

2020.06.02

9 Deputy I. Gardiner of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding use of private Covid-19 tests (OQ.148/2020):

Given that COVID-19 is a notifiable disease under the Notifiable Diseases (Amendment No. 2) (Jersey) Order 2020 will the Minister advise what data, if any, is provided to the Health and Community Services Department by Orchid Care Services in respect of any clients who test positive for COVID-19 and if any details are provided does the department then track and trace the clients who tested positive?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Orchid Care Services is a private undertaking that is not affiliated to Government. Orchid are publishing anonymised summaries of their test results, although this information has not been requested by Government. COVID-19 is a notifiable disease and all healthcare professionals should be aware of their obligations to report confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. As it currently stands, however, the 1934 Public Health Law does not make explicit provision for providers of testing or diagnostic services. Anyone who uses the Orchid Care Service who receives a positive result for IgM antibodies should contact the coronavirus helpline to discuss their case history and arrange a P.C.R. test as they may be infectious to others. Officers from the helpline will then complete the notifiable diseases online notification and the contact tracing team are responsible for communicating P.C.R. results to patients and will then interview those who test positive for coronavirus so that direct contacts can be traced and tested. It is important to stress, as covered with Senator Ferguson, that the antibody testing cannot be used for individual diagnostic patient testing. We are only using them in government as part of 3 ethically approved programmes of research to establish the spread of the virus within target populations.

[11:00]

3.9.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Since Orchid started testing almost 2 weeks ago 61 clients had antibodies and 41 were tested with positive traces of, which means they may still be infected or may have recently recovered from a COVID-19 infection. As Orchid and our Health and Community Services use an identical test would the Minister look into creating a process whereby data on COVID infection gathered by Orchid be shared with us, with the Government and would be followed up with a P.C.R. test regardless of whether they have any symptoms? I am particularly worried about people being tested positive and being asymptomatic.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Notwithstanding that Orchid is not part of government, of course, there have been communications to understand what Orchid are doing and to get some reassurance over the means by which they administer these tests and what advice they give to those who arrive for testing but the data and the test results belong to the person who has asked for the test. There is no compulsion that we can put around this to ensure that those test results are shared by Orchid with Government or indeed anyone else without the consent of the person who is tested. It is the decision of that person, but we would always advise, and I think it is the case that Orchid also advise anyone receiving that positive test to contact the coronavirus helpline.