

2020.05.12

**14 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding coronavirus statistics (OQ.129/2020)**

Given that there are currently 12 presumptive deaths among the 24 people reported to have died from COVID-19 in Jersey, will the Minister advise Members what steps, if any, are being taken to determine conclusively the cause of death of these 12 presumptive victims and, furthermore, to ensure that, in future, any deaths from COVID-19 are accurately and conclusively determined?

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

I believe this question may be based on a misunderstanding, the certification of probably COVID-19. That is a legitimate and determinative cause of death in itself being based on other diagnostic tools or methods other than a positive COVID laboratory test. In line with U.K. standard guidelines concerning policies on death certification of COVID-19, a doctor can certify COVID-19 based either on a positive laboratory test or based on symptoms, clinical examination and investigations, such as a chest X-ray, and that diagnosis would be probable COVID-19. In certifying a cause of death, a doctor is required to provide a legal declaration that they have diagnosed the causes of death to the best of their knowledge and belief.

**4.14.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

The Minister has given an explanation there but can he tell us in the 12 cases where people are presumed to have died, were their bodies examined, has there been a post-mortem on those people to determine definitely the cause of death rather than the suspicion that it is COVID-19 because of certain of the factors, which also relate to flu in many cases, which were diagnosed beforehand?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I can confirm that all bodies were examined by doctors as that is a requirement of our death certification process; that is a legal requirement. Some may have been subject to post-mortem but not all of them would have been. The Deputy has spoken about suspicion; that is the wrong word to use, this is based on, as I have said, symptoms, clinical examination and investigation, and the doctor certifies from the knowledge of the medical history of the deceased that the probable COVID-19 is a cause of death to the best of that doctor's knowledge and belief.

**The Bailiff:**

Before moving on to the next question, could I just clarify, in case it had been misunderstood, when a questioner asks a question and the Minister answers, it is open to Members to ask further questions. I merely will not allow supplementary questions to those further questions of the same Minister, other than one supplementary available to the initial questioner. I hope that is clear and we now come to question 15 that Senator Moore will ask of the Chief Minister.