



Coronavirus: Wales tests 90% of suspected patients in their own home

Elisabeth Mahase

The BMJ

Wales has managed to test 90% of people suspected of being infected with novel coronavirus in their own homes, after implementing community testing for covid-19.

Vaughan Gething, minister for health and social services in Wales, credited the NHS with making the process “as convenient as possible for people whilst also protecting our ambulance and hospital resources for those who need it most.”

More than 100 people had been tested in Wales as of 13 February, with no positive cases. Around the UK, nine cases have been confirmed. Gething said that health services in Wales were trying to “manage as many people as possible outside of hospital.”

He said, “Testing in the community is proving very effective and works well whilst we are in the detection of infection phase. We are working closely with the NHS and social care to ensure that, should the situation change and we see some spread of coronavirus in the community, our services are ready to provide a swift response.”

Self-isolation

In Wales, members of the public who call NHS Direct Wales or 111 Wales and meet the current case definition are referred to Public Health Wales’s health protection team. If assessed as a possible case a decision is then made as to whether people are suitable for home testing on the basis of their self-reported health status and their ability to self-isolate at home.

NHS Wales has seven health boards that provide local healthcare services. Public Health Wales’s microbiology team then

coordinates with the relevant health board community testing teams to arrange home testing within 12-36 hours.

Gething said that he was “grateful to the public for following our clear message that they should not attend their GP practice or present at hospital emergency departments.”

Community testing for covid-19 has also been rolled out in other areas of the UK including London, where doctors working in a number of NHS trusts came together to share best practice.¹ The team explained in *The BMJ* how they had rolled out community testing.²

Covid-19 has so far resulted in the deaths of 2008 people worldwide, more than the combined total from the 2003 SARS outbreak (774) and MERS in 2012-19 (858 deaths).³ This is despite the novel virus being branded as less deadly because of its lower case fatality rate—2%, compared with 10% from SARS (8098 cases, 774 deaths) and 35% from MERS (2494 cases, 858 deaths)—reflecting instead the higher number of cases of covid-19 (75 240 as of 18 February).

- 1 Mahase E. Coronavirus: home testing pilot launched in London to cut hospital visits and ambulance use. *BMJ* 2020;368:m621. 10.1136/bmj.m621 32060015
- 2 Coronavirus: rolling out community testing for covid-19 in the NHS. *BMJ Opinion* 2020 Feb 17. <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/02/17/coronavirus-rolling-out-community-testing-for-covid-19-in-the-nhs/>.
- 3 Mahase E. Coronavirus covid-19 has killed more people than SARS and MERS combined, despite lower case fatality rate. *BMJ* 2020;368:m641. 10.1136/bmj.m641 32071063

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