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Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 39910/20 To ask the Minister for Health the criteria the death of a person must meet for the cause of death to be recorded as Covid-19 despite them having other underlying health issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Fitzmaurice

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Based on international directives, namely World Health Organization (WHO) guidance, the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) has prepared guidelines for reporting deaths in COVID-19 cases.

All possible, probable and confirmed COVID-19 deaths should be notified unless there is a clear alternative cause of death that cannot be related to COVID disease (e.g. trauma). In any death in a COVID-19 case, there should be no period of complete recovery from COVID-19 between illness and death. This decision not to certify a death as a COVID-19 death will be based on the clinical judgement of the attending physician.

In some instances, a death due to COVID-19 may not be attributed to another disease (e.g. cancer). However, in this instance, it should be counted as a COVID-19 death independently of pre-existing conditions that are suspected of triggering a severe course of COVID-19.

It is advised that deaths that fulfil the following criteria should be notified to HPSC as COVID-19 deaths:

- **Deaths in confirmed COVID-19 case:** A death in a person diagnosed with laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 infection, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms (including post mortem) (*Exceptions to this ruling described below*)
- **Deaths in probable COVID-19 case:** A death in a person with probable COVID-19 as per the COVID-19 case definition for surveillance purposes on HPSC website at www.hpsc.ie
- **Deaths in possible/suspect COVID-19 case:** See below scenarios for possible /suspect cases which should be reported as possible/suspect COVID-19 deaths:
 - All deaths in patients suspected of having COVID-19 i.e. patients with symptoms clinically compatible with COVID-19 illness. These suspect cases may or may not have been laboratory tested for COVID-

19 prior to death. These possible COVID-19 deaths include patients with pending COVID-19 laboratory results.

- All unexplained deaths/sudden deaths in residential facilities with a confirmed/suspected COVID-19 cluster/outbreak of illness unless there is a clear alternative cause of death that cannot be related to COVID disease (e.g. trauma)

All COVID-19 deaths reported as such from Coroners should be notified as COVID-19 deaths. The case classification for these deaths should be assigned as per the COVID-19 case definition.

In addition, each day HPSC receives a daily list of deaths from all causes from the General Register Office (GRO) which were registered in Ireland in the previous day. These deaths are checked for COVID-19 as a cause of death and are cross-checked with COVID-19 cases already reported to HPSC, so as to ensure that these deaths are recorded by HPSC and to facilitate completeness of COVID-19 death reporting. All registered deaths with COVID-19 reported in any of the four cause of death fields should be notified as a COVID-19 death, with the case classification assigned as per the COVID-19 case definition.

If you require any further information or clarification please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,



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