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Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
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Re: 16254/21 To ask the Minister for Health if the definition of a Covid-19 death will be amended or updated as more persons are vaccinated; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Carroll MacNeill

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

The definition of a COVID-19 death currently used by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) (for surveillance purposes) is detailed below and is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 death classification and reporting guidance-see

https://www.who.int/classifications/icd/Guidelines_Cause_of_Death_COVID-19.pdf?ua=1.

Definition of a COVID-19 death used by HPSC

For surveillance purposes, COVID-19 deaths include deaths in all possible, probable and confirmed COVID-19 cases ([as per the Irish COVID-19 case definition](#)) and all should be notified, unless there is a clear alternative cause of death that cannot be related to COVID-19 infection (e.g. trauma). There should be no period of complete recovery from COVID-19 between illness and death.

HPSC has not changed the above definition of COVID-19 deaths since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and is unlikely to do so based on whether or not a person is vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccine.

Mortality monitoring is an important component of COVID-19 surveillance in terms of assessing the severity of the infection and in determining which age groups/at risk groups are most severely affected by the disease. Monitoring of deaths due to COVID-19 will also be important post vaccination as it will be one of the indicators for measuring the impact of the vaccine i.e. the reduction in the number of COVID-19 deaths post implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. If a person dies of COVID-19 (whether or not they are vaccinated) and meets the definition above, they will be classified and notified as a COVID-19 death.

HPSC continually monitors the WHO website/guidance and may update or amend the definition of a COVID-19 death in the future based on WHO updates.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Cuddihy". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Dr John Cuddihy,
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