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5th November 2021

Deputy Cormac Devlin
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ 52163/21 To ask the Minister for Health the volume of Covid-19 SARS-CoV-2 tests sequenced by the National Virus Reference Laboratory over the past six months in tabular form; the position regarding variants of concern and variants under investigation circulating in Ireland as detected by the National Virus Reference Laboratory over the past six months with particular reference to the AY.4.2 delta sublineage; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Devlin

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

This response describes data received from the NVRL up to Wednesday November 4th 2021. Data were extracted from HPSC's Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting System (CIDR) on November 1st 2021 at 7:30 am. CIDR is a dynamic system and case details may be updated at any time. Therefore, the data described here may differ from previously reported data and data reported for the same time period in the future.

Time period: there is generally a 2 week lag time between a case being selected for whole genome sequencing and sequencing being completed. Therefore, whole genome sequencing results for all cases notified in October that are being sequenced/will be sequenced are not yet available. Data on sequencing volume are provided for March to September as this 6-month time period is a more accurate reflection of sequencing volume over the past six months (table 1).

Data on whole genome sequencing results are provided as of the latest results available from NVRL (table 2). Please note that updates in Pango lineage software may sometimes result in a sequenced case being retrospectively assigned to a different lineage. This typically occurs where a new sublineage is defined for a specific variant that is a better fit for the sequenced case. This is occurring more frequently in recent months as additional Delta sublineages are designated. For more information please refer to: <https://cov-lineages.org/FAQ.html>. Although the Delta sublineage AY.4.2 (Delta) has been identified relatively recently in Ireland, many of the cases identified to date were

retrospectively reassigned to this sublineage having been previously reported as another sublineage, mostly AY.4 (Delta). The specimen dates for AY.4.2 cases identified to date range from June 1st to September 30th 2021.

Table 1. Number of patients notified with confirmed COVID-19 on CIDR and number sequenced by NVRL, March to September 2021

Month	Confirmed COVID-19 cases notified on CIDR	Cases sequenced by NVRL	% of cases sequenced
March	16352	3558	21.8
April	12856	3317	25.8
May	12748	4650	36.5
June	10040	2957	29.5
July	28888	5674	19.6
August	49651	5967	12
September	40241	4555	11.3
Total March to September	170,776	30,678	18.0

Table 2. Whole genome sequencing results for COVID-19 cases sampled since mid-December 2020 and since March 2021 (specimen dates: December 13th 2020 to October 20th 2021)

Virus variant	Number of cases from week 51 2020 to date (specimen dates: December 13th 2020 to October 20th 2021)	Number of cases from March 2021 to date (specimen dates: March 1st to October 20th 2021)
Variants of concern		
Delta and Delta sublineages		
B.1.617.2 (Delta)	8041	8041
AY.3 (Delta)	563	563
AY.4 (Delta)	6761	6761
AY.4.1 (Delta)	16	16
AY.4.2 (Delta)	87	87
AY.4.3 (Delta)	15	15
AY.4.4 (Delta)	1	1
AY.4.5 (Delta)	8	8
AY.5 (Delta)	1003	1003
AY.6 (Delta)	325	325
AY.7 (Delta)	98	98
AY.7.1 (Delta)	3	3
AY.7.2 (Delta)	5	5
AY.8 (Delta)	4	4
AY.9 (Delta)	488	488
AY.10 (Delta)	2	2
AY.12 (Delta)	52	52
AY.14 (Delta)	1	1
AY.16 (Delta)	4	4
AY.17 (Delta)	1	1
AY.20 (Delta)	3	3
AY.22 (Delta)	2	2
AY.23 (Delta)	5	5
AY.25 (Delta)	9	9
AY.26 (Delta)	2	2
AY.32 (Delta)	2	2
AY.33 (Delta)	12	12
AY.34 (Delta)	48	48
AY.36 (Delta)	4	4
AY.39 (Delta)	8	8
AY.43 (Delta)	18	18
AY.44 (Delta)	1	1
AY.46.6 (Delta)	1	1
B.1.351 (Beta)	77	47
P.1 (Gamma)	33	26
B.1.1.7 (Alpha)	16053	12548
Variants of interest/under monitoring		
C.37 (Lambda)	4	4
B.1.621 (Mu)	4	4
B.1.1.318	241	232
B.1.1.318.4 (AZ.4)	6	6

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lois O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'L' and 'O'.

Dr Lois O'Connor MB MICGP MPH MFPHMI, IMC 021192

Interim Director of HPSC,

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